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THE FLYING PRIEST  
OVER THE ARCTIC







Paul Schulte, O. M. I.

# THE FLYING PRIEST *over the* ARCTIC

*A Story of Everlasting Ice  
and of Everlasting Love*

*by*

FATHER PAUL SCHULTE, O.M.I.



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*Dedicated*  
to  
*Our Lady of the Snows*

“She hath opened her hand to the needy, and  
stretched out her hands to the poor. She shall  
not fear for her house in the cold of snow.”

—PROVERBS 31:20-21



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## FOREWORD

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POPULARLY I am known as "The Flying Priest." The Eskimos call me Tingmischuk-uleriye-iksiruar, "The Father Who Has Wings." I have been flying for twenty-four years. I learned the game during the World War. After it was over I became a missionary and a priest in the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose motto is: "To preach the gospel to the poor the Lord has sent me."

My best friend and comrade during the war, Otto Fuhrmann, became an Oblate Priest with me. We were ordained on the same day—July 2, 1922. Both of us volunteered for the foreign missions. Father Fuhrmann was sent to Southwest Africa. I was given special training for the Home Missions, and later I preached missions and retreats in nearly every section of my native land. In 1925 Father Fuhrmann fell ill of malaria and pneumonia. It took four days and four nights to carry him to the nearest field hospital in Ovamboland, no more than eighty miles from his mission station. He died without the consolation of having a priest near him at the end. When I heard the news that my dearest friend, comrade in arms, and brother-priest,

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had died under such tragic circumstances, I resolved that henceforth I would make it my work to aid all other missionaries, sisters and brothers; that I would devote myself to the task of placing at the service of the missions throughout the world modern means of communication—automobiles, motorboats, airplanes, and wireless telegraphy—so that the burdens of God's brave warriors might be lightened, their working strength increased and multiplied, and speedy aid given to them in times of illness.

In 1938, flying a small plane, I saved the life of a French missionary in the Arctic. That flight covered twenty-two hundred miles. Often in its course I thought of my dear friend Otto Fuhrmann who had lain ill only eighty miles from the nearest hospital, yet had died without help or companionship. His death became the birthday of the MIVA, which I founded and incorporated in 1927. MIVA stands for Missionary International Vehicular Association. Many hundreds of automobiles, a whole fleet of motorboats, a dozen airplanes and fifteen radio stations have since been placed in the service of missions throughout the world—all of them as donations. We have not asked to what race or nation the missionary or mission-sister belonged. We have aided where the need seemed greatest and with all the means at our disposal. We have one hundred thousand friends who are determined not to leave their missionary troops in the Church unaided, one hundred thousand mission-minded supporters who are unselfishly offering their mites annually in order to reach the desired goal—the motorization of the missions at sea, on land and in the air.

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After I had returned from my African expedition in 1930 I was granted two private audiences by Pope Pius XI. Toward the close of one of them the Holy Father went to a large desk in his private library, took from the many gifts deposited there an Eskimo dog sled carved out of a walrus tooth, a present from Bishop Arsène Turquetil, and spoke of the appalling journeys which had to be undertaken by the Eskimo missionaries in the vicariates of Bishop Breynat, Bishop Grouard (who had visited him some years before at the age of eighty-three), and of Bishop Turquetil. He stressed again and again his view that it was exactly there, among the Eskimos, that the MIVA ought to begin its work with airplanes. This he repeatedly declared his wish.

During the second audience the Holy Father walked toward me, took both my hands into his own, and looking into my eyes with warm paternal affection asked me if I would be ready to go to the poorest missionaries of the world, in order to introduce among them the use of airplanes and wireless telegraphy.

"Go to the poorest and most isolated of all missionaries, those in the Arctic—my blessing accompanies you. May everyone help you to carry out your task." And assuring me once more, the Holy Father repeated: "Never forget that my blessing will rest on you amid all your hardships and difficulties."

Since then, I have spent four seasons in the Arctic. I have flown back and forth on trips covering many thousands of miles, in order to aid these dwellers in the land of everlasting ice and snow and to preach the gospel to the poor.

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The last blessing which I received from the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, was sent to me through Bishop Turquetil who, on November 20, 1938, addressed the following letter to me in the Arctic:

“Dear Father Schulte:

“On the fourteenth of last September I promised the Holy Father to repeat to you his own words about you and your work—and I am very glad indeed to fulfill my promise.

“I had been telling him about your rescue of Father Cochard when he was in a dying condition and all alone, where none of his confreres could go to help him—either by boat or by dog team. I showed the Holy Father cuts from newspapers which described your daring flight. I showed him letters from the Fathers telling how you had carried the sick missionary through the air—and also the Consecrated Hosts, which he had kept that he might receive Communion in his last moments. Finally I told the Holy Father that in forty-eight hours you alone in your plane had brought Father Cochard to safety in the hospital at Chesterfield Inlet, where, according to the last cablegram, he was quickly recovering from his poisoned condition.

“The answer of the Holy Father was: ‘We know the MIVA. We know Father Schulte. The MIVA must be kept alive. Everyone should help.’

“Then he asked me: ‘Will you see Father Schulte soon?’



## FOREWORD

"I answered: 'I most certainly shall see him in October or November.'

"Then you must tell him that the Vicar of Christ is sending him a special blessing, in recognition of what he is doing for the poor Oblate Missionaries in the Eskimo country and tell him also that We express from our very heart best wishes for the success of his efforts to help the poorest, the most isolated, and the hardest missions of the world.'

"I am glad to fulfill my promise and to write this happy message from the Pope of the Missions to you about your noble work."

And on March 20, 1939, the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, who ever since 1927 has been an active friend and supporter of our work, sent to the MIVA as well as to me personally his Apostolic Blessing—a strong encouragement to continue our efforts.

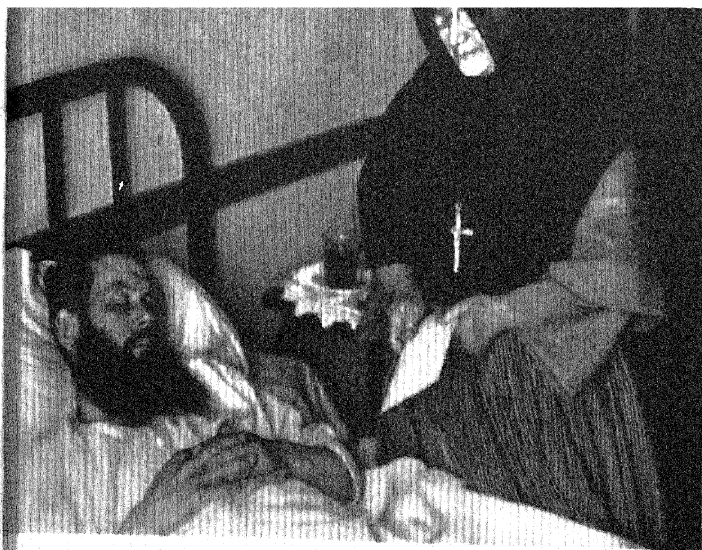
I need only add that I have been happy in being allowed to help bring some alleviation of their hard fate to the native tribes of the Arctic—the Eskimos—and to their brave guardians and helpers, their Missionaries, Sisters, Brothers and Physicians.

Paul Schulte, O.M.I.



THE FLYING PRIEST  
OVER THE ARCTIC





"Father Julien Cochard was given over to the care of the Sisters"

Hospital St. Therese at Chesterfield Inlet





*M. F. Therese* bringing provisions to Repulse Bay on its summer trip

Eskimo sled with sail to lighten the work of the dogs





"It is startling to hear the gurgling voices of the Indian school children communicating with their parents over the Fort Albany radio station"

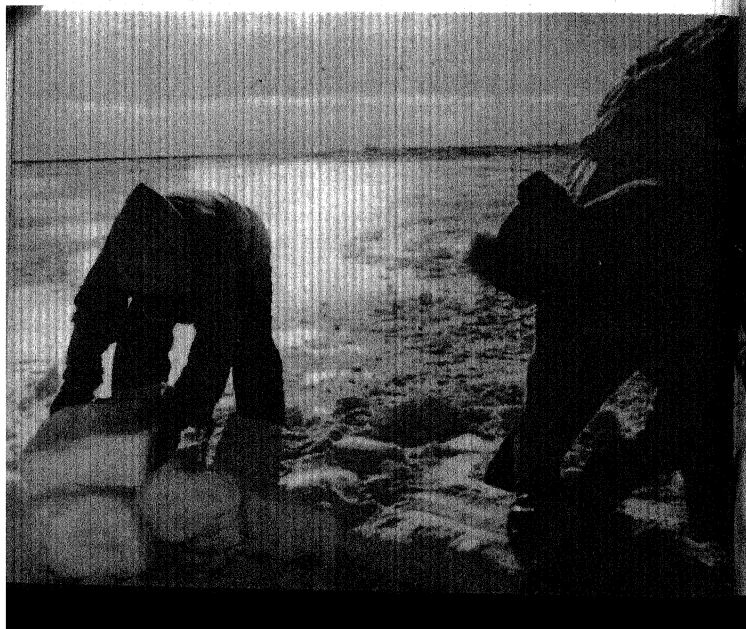
Father Schulte and Bishop Henri Belleau at James Bay





Everlasting Ice

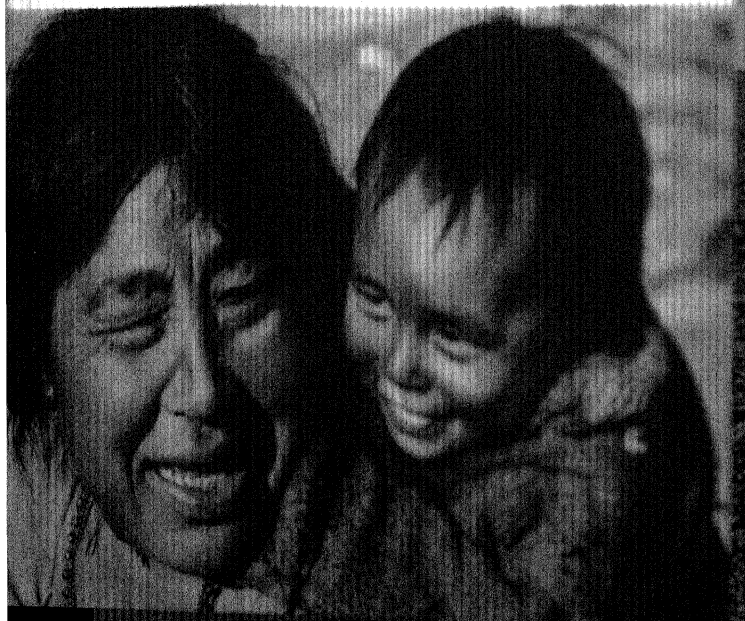
"Building blocks of frozen snow are laid on the ground in the form of circles"







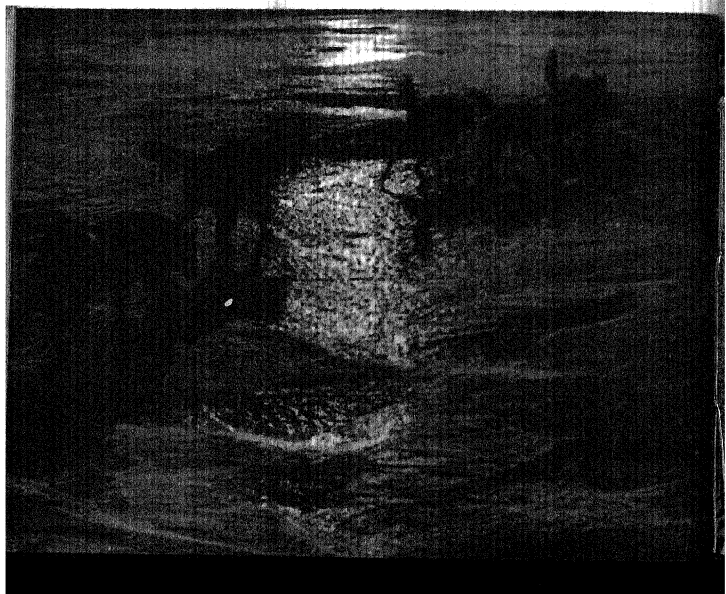
*Some of my Eskimo friends*





*The Flying Cross in the Land of the Midnight Sun*

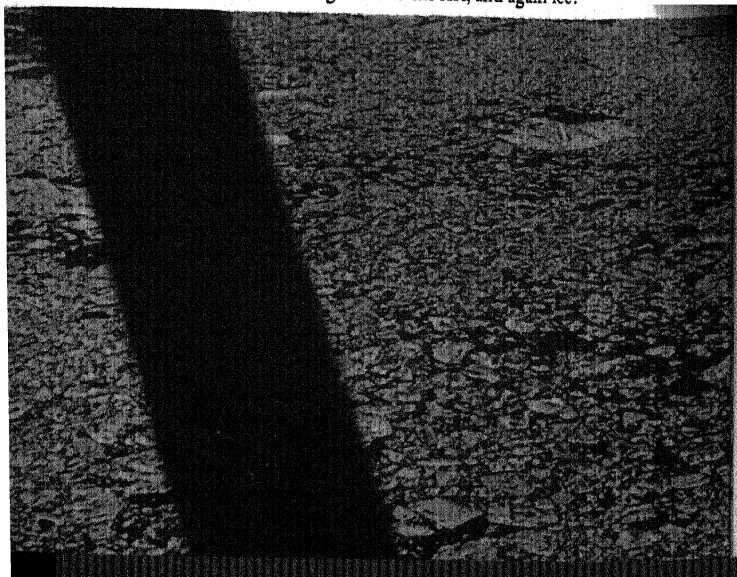
Comrades unto death





Father Schulte (left) with Brother Beaudoin, his mechanic, in the cockpit of *The Flying Cross*

"I saw only ice below me—ice to the right and to the left, and again ice!"

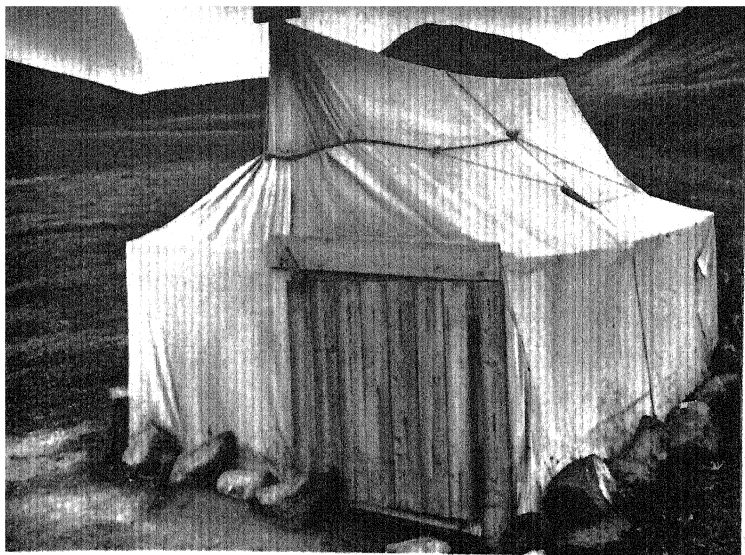




The Flying Priest and Dr. Thomas Melling in front of Okumaluk's tent of sealskin

Dr. Melling examines Okumaluk's bullet wound

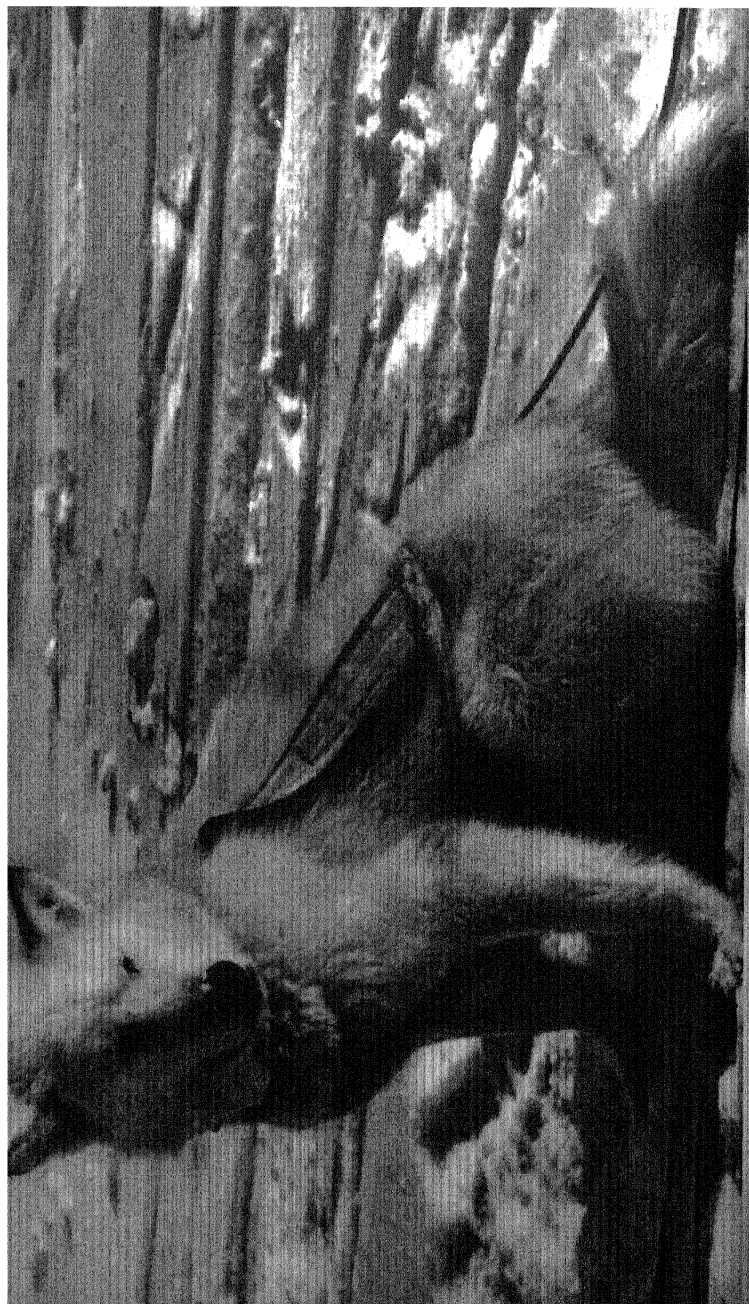




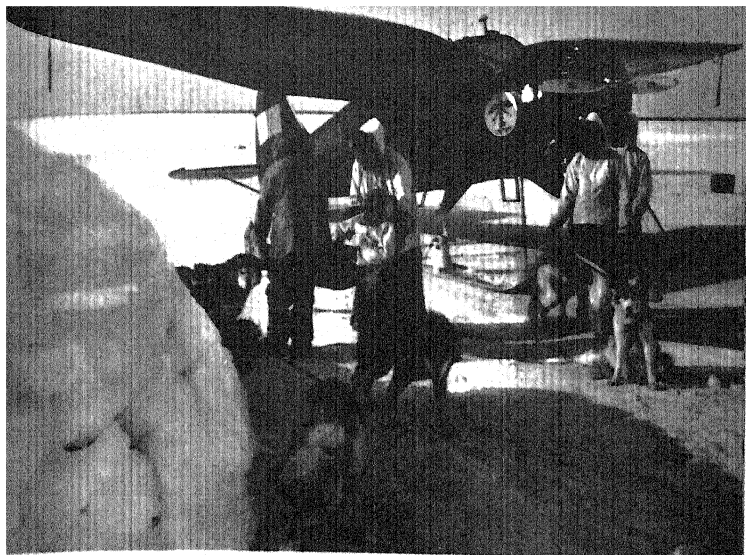
The northernmost mission in the world, in Arctic Bay

"My courageous patient, Father Julien Cochard, became very weak in the plane"





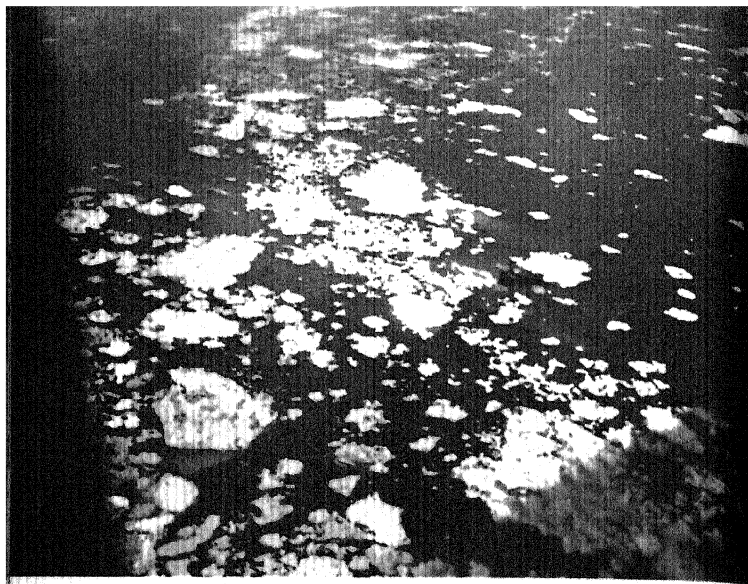




"I was glad that instead of bombs my plane brought health and life"

Transport of the sick in summertime from Igloodik to the hospital at Chesterfield Inlet



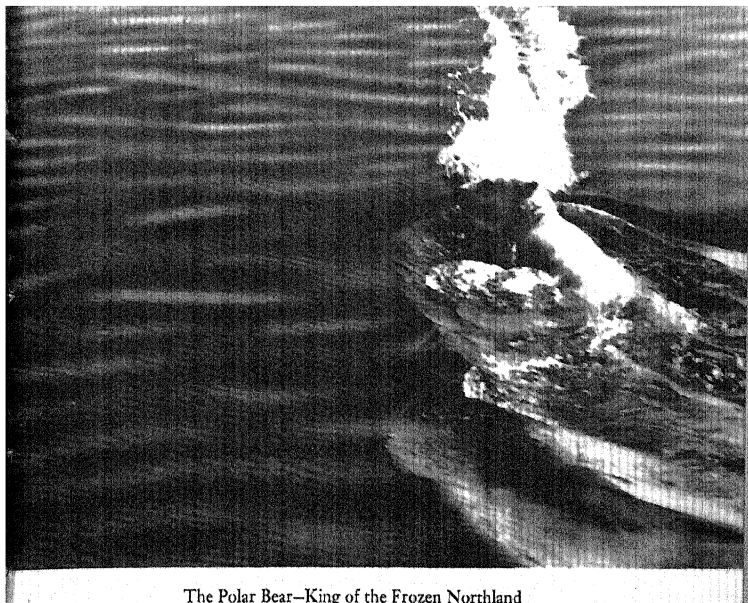


"The *M. F. Therese* looked like a tiny fly when I looked down on her from the plane"

"My plane lands amid the ice floes close to the *M. F. Therese*"

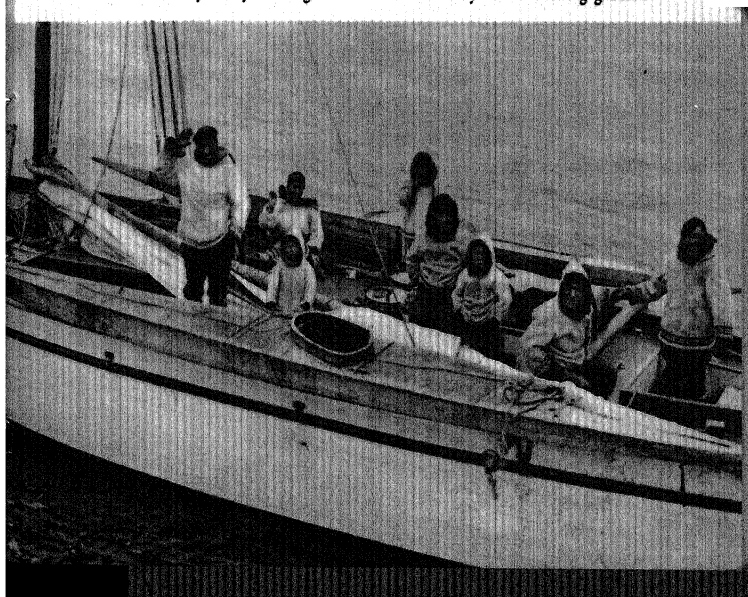






The Polar Bear—King of the Frozen Northland

An Eskimo family ready to weigh anchor and sail away to the hunting grounds

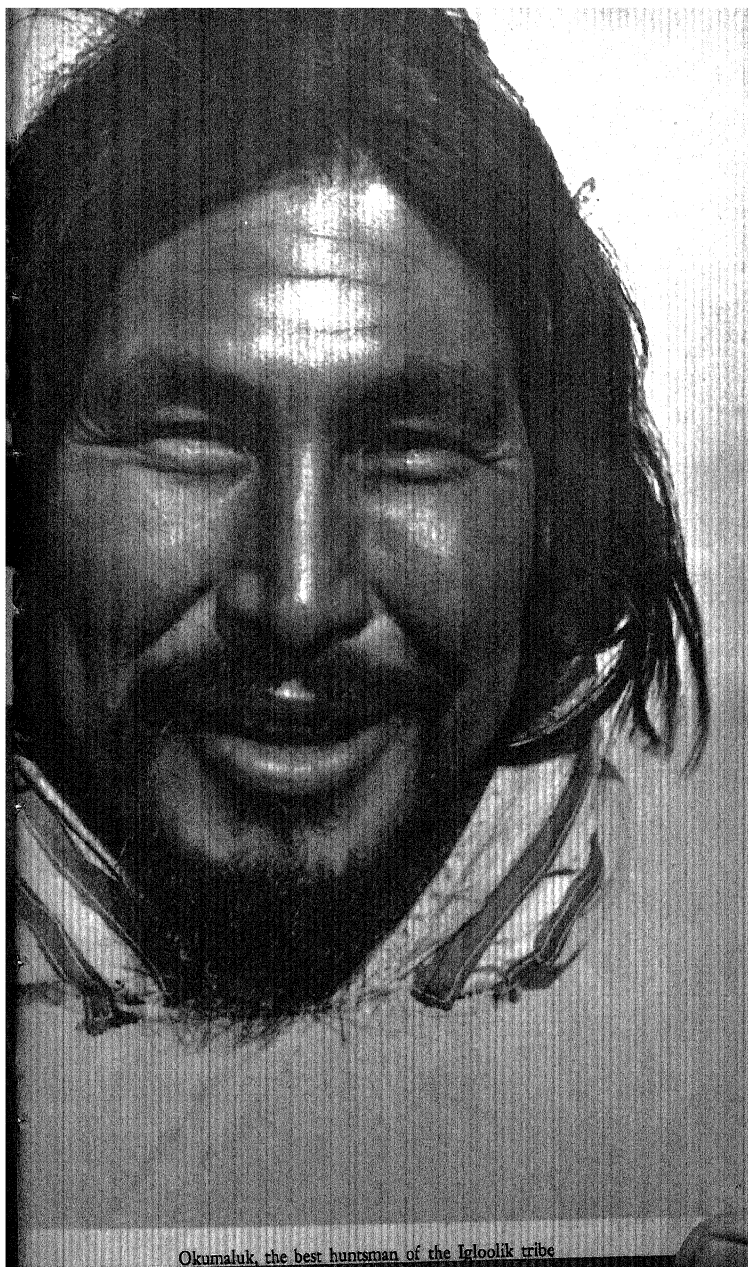




Most Reverend Bishop A. Turquetil

Bishop A. Clabaut giving his first Episcopal blessing after his consecration

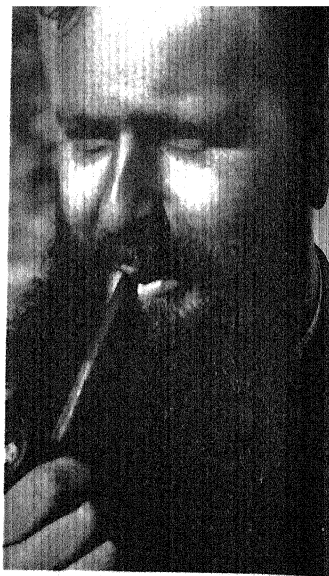




Okumaluk, the best huntsman of the Igloodik tribe



Father Dunleavy of the golden heart



Father Bazin, who survived trying circumstances

Brother Beaudoin, my faithful mechanic



Brother Lavoie, Master of the dogs in James Bay



# 1

## S.O.S.—ARCTIC BAY

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WHEN for the first time I went through an Arctic snowstorm, the kind that may rage without letup for three, six, seven or nine days and nights, I had a grand opportunity to meditate on the fact that a visit to the Arctic is something more than mere adventure. The howling of the storm was louder than that of the dogs. The cold was so intense that it made me wince with pain. The snow whirling about me was so thick that I could not see a hand before my eyes.

In the Arctic region the snow does not come down in heavy white flakes as I remember it at home. It is a fine-grained dust which at one moment settles squarely on the ground and at the next is whirling about once more in fury. It penetrates everywhere. It veils a hand

## THE FLYING PRIEST OVER THE ARCTIC

held a few inches from the eyes and gives the traveler a feeling of danger and lassitude, so that he needs all his will power to resist the temptation to lie down and rest. A missionary once told me that he was overtaken by a snowstorm while out fishing one day and became snow-blind. He groped about for four days before getting back to the mission.

At our northernmost mission station of Arctic Bay, above the seventy-second degree north latitude, the Arctic night lasts from three to four months. This long period, with its bitter cold and its loneliness, spent amid those immeasurable wastes of ice and snow, weighs heavily upon the missionaries. But there are times, even in the Arctic night, when the starry sky is so luminous that it is possible to go on hunting trips. When the sky is adrift with clouds, however, or when storms howl over the snow, life becomes gloomy and dismal and a light must be kept burning continuously. This luxury is permissible only when there is a sufficient supply of oil. If it gives out, the house is in total darkness. Some of the missionaries are so poor that they cannot afford the luxury of candlelight except for Holy Mass and for their frugal meals. These men need to be heroic to disregard the Arctic night and to take up the burden of its long, gloomy loneliness for the sake of the faith. Illness finds them cut off from all human aid.

One calm August day in 1938 Bishop Armand Clabaut received an urgent message from Arctic Bay: "Father Julien Cochard very ill for nine days. Tem-

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perature 105 degrees. Severe pains in left side. Takes no nourishment. Please help."

The message was signed by Allen Scott, of the Hudson Bay Company, and had come by way of Nottingham Island in Hudson Strait. It reached Bishop Clabaut aboard the icebreaker *Nascopie*, which was ready to sail from Churchill to Arctic Bay. He turned to Father Prime Girard, a fellow missionary, and remarked: "This would have been a wonderful opportunity for Father Schulte, but, alas, there is no gasoline at Arctic Bay."

As a matter of fact, two barrels of gasoline were aboard the icebreaker bound for Arctic Bay, but they would not reach their destination for four weeks. This would be too late to save Father Cochard. Thus the first suggestion of an immediate rescue flight was sorrowfully abandoned.

Besides other heavy cares which the youthful Bishop Clabaut had to shoulder, he now envisaged another blow in the loss of one of his missionaries. Two other Fathers had been incapacitated by illness that year—Father Alain Kermel, of Eskimo Point, and Father Arthur Thibert, of Baker Lake. A third missionary, Father Lionel Ducharme, of Chesterfield Inlet, was on his way to Rome with Bishop Arsène Turquetil, head of the vicariate, to be present at the General Chapter. They would not return to the mission in the ice fields for a year.

At one o'clock Father Girard returned from the harbor where the *Nascopie* was docked to have his luncheon with us. After the meal, speaking like a man

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who has lost all hope of saving his best friend, he explained the circumstances to me. He pointed out that the icebreaker, taking four weeks for the journey, could give no aid in this case. I might have tried a flight to Arctic Bay had gasoline for refueling purposes been obtainable there, he added, but since there was no fuel the flight would be useless.

"When did the radiogram arrive?" I inquired.

"At eleven this morning," said Father Girard.

Hearing this I volunteered at once to undertake the flight to save Father Cochard. Although Father Girard reminded me again that I should find no gasoline at Arctic Bay, I recalled that the year before I had given orders for a shipment of gasoline to Igloolik, two hundred and seventy miles south of Arctic Bay. If I could be assured by someone that my orders had been carried out and that the gasoline actually had been unloaded at Igloolik, everything would be in order. In the Arctic we never know for certain whether or not goods have been unloaded and delivered unless we have been present at the unloading or have seen a photograph of the unloaded cargo at the point of destination.

I called Henry Haffmans, who had been aboard the mission ship when she made her call at Igloolik during the previous summer. At that time I had given him ten rolls of Leica film with the commission to take as many pictures as he could find worth-while scenes. It now transpired that one of these Leica films was destined to play a part in saving Father Cochard's life.

"Show me all the pictures you took at Igloolik last



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year," I said. "I know you photographed the Eskimo queen who ate up her first husband. However, she is of no interest now. What I need to know at this moment is whether or not the gasoline which was ordered to be shipped to Igloolik a year ago, actually was unloaded. Bring on all your photos."

There was a shout of joy from both of us when we found the picture we needed—a view of six barrels of gasoline and one barrel of oil unloaded from the steamer and lying on the beach of Igloolik. After this documentary assurance had been obtained, no one could have kept me back any longer. I knew I could carry a part of this cargo of gasoline to some point between Igloolik and Arctic Bay, so as to be sure to have it conveniently available in case I ran into strong head winds on my return flight. I had to go twenty-two hundred miles and the flight had to be made as quickly as possible. I had no orders from the Bishop, so I took full responsibility for my own decision. I confidently assumed that both Bishop Turquetil and Bishop Clabaut would approve as soon as they learned of it. Haffmans contributed his share of encouragement by daring me to make the flight and reminding me of my previously expressed eagerness for adventure:

"Only yesterday you remarked that life seemed tedious here and that there was too little to do," he reminded me. "Now you have your opportunity."

I laughed and said: "I fly!"

Haffmans meant well and really was eager to make the flight with me, for he is brave, ever ready to help, and trustworthy. But I could not take him along, be-

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cause I wanted all available space in the plane for a capacity cargo of gasoline. Brother Beaudoin had been engaged during the forenoon in repair work on the right wing tank of our plane. During our flight of the day before, when we were carrying Bishop Clabaut nine hundred miles through the air from Pelly Bay to Churchill, we had noticed a leak in our tank just after reaching Eskimo Point, and only in time to avoid running dry of gas while in the air. The hole in the tank was due to corrosion caused by sea water or, more precisely, by the saltish air.

This repair work proceeded now under high pressure. I should have liked to have taken off instantly, but I had no right to risk the long journey through fog, ice, and darkness with a leaky gas tank. At ten o'clock the repair work was finished. The old tank had been taken out, reinforced, soldered, and put back in position. By midnight the fueling of the plane was completed.

After a couple of hours of restless sleep I arose at two o'clock, wakened Brother Leo Beaudoin, my mechanic, celebrated Holy Mass at two-thirty, had breakfast at three and half an hour later Father Richard Ferron, rector of the Bishop's residence at Churchill, invited Beaudoin and me into his mission truck of antediluvian date, drove us down to the harbor, put us in a canoe, and paddled us to the seaplane. Beaudoin caressed the motor for a few minutes and then declared the plane ready for the journey.

There were no weather reports to be inspected before we started. I made a last minute examination of

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the available maps. The best of these, covering the northernmost and hardest stretch of my journey, which no air pilot had ever flown, had been given to me the night before by Haffmans, together with a short note in his own handwriting, which read:

“Captain Cox of the *M. F. Therese* asked me to give you his greetings and this latest map of your northern route. The location of the mission of Igloolik is indicated by a pencil mark. Will you, please, be so kind as to trace on this map, during your return flight, the location and extent of the ice fields which you meet.

“Signed: Haffmans.”

At this hour of the night the writer of the note was still asleep in his berth aboard the *M. F. Therese*. I am sure that he heard nothing of the noise of my motor. The mission ship was loaded down, as she had been the previous summer, with the annual provisions for all the northern missions of the Hudson Bay Territory, and I was shortly to guide her through Frozen Strait on her way to Igloolik. Consequently I was glad to carry out the captain's request, while hoping that neither I nor my plane would have any physical contact with the ice fields. So long as my motor functioned properly my job of charting the ice fields would be far easier than the captain's task of actually pushing his way through the ice.

As usual, before a take-off, I made the sign of the cross on my forehead and said a short prayer for a successful flight. I opened the throttle to half-power and

## THE FLYING PRIEST OVER THE ARCTIC

then to full power. The motor roared its sonorous morning prayer into the chill air, and *The Flying Cross* came up on the step of the pontoons and quickly took on speed—thirty miles, forty miles, fifty ——

A fish twelve feet long rose out of the salt water—a white whale—turning broadside in front of the plane. I raced toward the unwelcome sea monster at full speed. A clear realization of the danger flashed through my mind. If I did not succeed in jumping, leapfrog-fashion, over the fish, or if he did not plunge under before I reached him, then my pontoons would certainly crash into the monster and my plane would just as certainly turn over in the water.

I speeded toward him at sixty miles an hour and soon was only six feet away from him. With a lunge I pulled over the horizontal rudder as far as I could, and like a frolicsome youngster the plane leaped over the unfriendly stranger, clipped the water once more and then soared up into the air, spraying the heavily blowing fish with carbon monoxide gases from the exhaust of its engine, thereby giving the mischief-maker a bad taste and no doubt a scare.

I wiped the beads of perspiration from my forehead, took a deep breath, grinned broadly at Beaudoin and then circled around the mission station and the *M. F. Therese*, where, however, everyone seemed to be asleep. The motor reacted splendidly. We were on our way. I could not resist the idea of roaring over the little railway depot, proud outpost of our modern machine civilization, and the train which had arrived there. The Pull-

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man coach was full of summer guests who had ventured forth to these northern frontiers.

At Eskimo Point the roar of our plane roused two missionaries from their sleeping bags at six in the morning. This may not have seemed an act of kindness on our part; however, we would not have stopped there except that we had been asked to load some reindeer skins which were to be used for winter clothing by Father P. Henry and Father F. Van der Velde at Pelly Bay. Soon we took off again, the prayers and good wishes of the Fathers of Eskimo Point accompanying us on our errand of mercy. Passing over Mistake Bay we headed straight for Marble Island—and at half past eight we landed at Chesterfield Inlet in pouring rain.

Brother Beaudoin had slept during the whole flight. The poor fellow was ill and I had made a comfortable bed for him by using the reindeer skins and sleeping bags which we had taken aboard at Eskimo Point. I had sent two telegrams from Churchill to Chesterfield Inlet via the Government Radio Station, but as neither had yet arrived, nobody was expecting us. Brother Beaudoin filled the tanks while I ran to ask Dr. Thomas Melling, of the mission hospital, to fly with us to Arctic Bay. I thought it might be best to take the doctor to the patient as quickly as possible, but I found him sick in bed with fever and grippe. His wife was nursing him. Under these circumstances I could not urge him to join us in our flight, for an influenza patient exposing himself to the rigors of an Arctic flight and to the inevitable winds and drafts met on the way to and from the plane, would almost certainly develop pneumonia.

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Dr. Melling, a brave man who has never shirked his duty to the sick, was greatly disappointed, but Mrs. Melling was glad that her husband did not have to fly into an unexplored region. This was very human and easy to understand. I promised the physician I would do all that was possible to get Father Cochard back to the hospital at Chesterfield.

"If you succeed in doing this," he answered, "all will be well and we shall get him back on his feet."

Thus I had to fly without Dr. Melling. Brother Beaudoin was ill and exhausted by this time. Early in the morning, before leaving Churchill, he had admitted to me that his stomach was on strike and would retain no food. It was a plain case of overexhaustion. I fully understood and sympathized with him, for I myself for the past two weeks had felt an inclination to behave as he did. It is no mean feat to live on fish and preserves, to do without sleep and to make difficult flights.

During previous flights Beaudoin had occasionally assisted me in piloting the plane. When there was no special problem and the weather was calm he would steer the plane for an hour or so while I took a nap. But this time, in order to keep him in good shape for the technical work of the flight, I did not permit him to sit at the steering gear, but made him lie full length in his bed of furs beside me. The regularity of his breathing gave me hope that he soon would catch up on his sleep and be well again.

The task ahead of me of saving a human life kept me awake and at my post, and for the whole twenty-two hundred miles of flight, I was to have nobody at

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the controls but myself. The doctor had given me a prescription for Beaudoin, and the kindhearted Grey Nuns had filled it and wrapped up the medicine together with a thermos bottle of hot coffee. Then I had made a short visit to the Government Radio Station to ask for a weather report covering the region of the Arctic Circle. And when I had returned to the mission boat and paddled back to the plane I found myself nearly out of breath and wet through from the pouring rain.

The refueling of a seaplane with primitive fueling equipment consumes precious time, especially when one is on a sick call in the Arctic. How differently all this is handled in civilized territories! There the tanker comes rolling up to the landplane or comes floating up to the seaplane. The pilot need not leave his seat. Smiling to the service man he merely calls out: "Twenty-five gallons of gas." That is all. The attendants voluntarily give every possible aid. They pour the needed oil. They wipe the window without waiting to be asked to do so. All this is part of the service. The pilot signs a paper. He need not pay at once, for he can charge the cost. After a few minutes he is ready to take off once more. He need not even remove his gloves during these operations. Such would have been the service available to me, had I been making my sick call flight anywhere else. After soaring again into the air I should have dipped my wings to the crew below me to show my appreciation. I should have spoken through the microphone of my radio equipment and called out to the radio station of the airport: "I thank you."

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And the station would have answered: "You're welcome and good luck!"

We managed our tanking at Chesterfield Inlet in more primitive fashion, but we did our best. At eleven o'clock, we started for the mission station of "Our Lady of the Snows." During the noonday stretch of our flight I had the thrilling experience of seeing a perfect rainbow circling our plane. I have never seen a more impressive one. It was not a semicircle with arcs resting upon the horizon but a full circle completely surrounding me.

I was pleased also to see my air-mechanic sound asleep. The steady drive of the motor was humming a sonorous lullaby to him, but as soon as I turned off the motor in order to dive down for a landing on the waters of Repulse Bay, Beaudoin awoke. A good mechanic's concern for his motor is like a mother's concern for her child. When the child breathes evenly she may fall asleep, but when it becomes restless she awakes. So, when his motor begins to gasp and miss fire, the good mechanic awakes from his sleep and inquires of the motor: "What is the matter now? Are the spark plugs used up? Is the fuel bad? Has the milk turned sour? Is something stuck in your throat?"

Beaudoin saw to it quickly that everything was in proper condition. The landing flaps had been lowered, and a few seconds later I taxied the plane over the water along the latitude of the Arctic Circle, coming to a halt only a short distance away from the mission house of "Our Lady of the Snows." Because of the strong head winds, it had taken us about fifteen minutes longer than



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usual to make the flight from Chesterfield to Repulse Bay.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when Father Joseph Massé and Father Superior Marc Lacroix, whom I addressed as Melchisedech—because with his long beard he looked to me like a patriarch of the Old Law—came from the shore in their boat and brought us the necessary gasoline and oil. In order to save time we did not go ashore but refueled as hastily as we could, since we intended to fly fourteen hundred miles farther before nightfall. The reindeer skins which we had brought from Eskimo Point were unloaded here, to be transshipped to Pelly Bay on one of our future flights to that mission.

"Pray for the success of the flight" were my last words to the good Fathers. After that we flew away at full speed in the direction of Frozen Strait and its great fields of ice.

Up to this point I had flown a route which I knew. Now over Frozen Strait I saw only ice below me—ice to the right and to the left, and again ice! I hardly dared to think of having to make a forced landing. I caressed my motor like a good friend and was convinced that it would not fail me in this, the most difficult sector of my flight. I wished that I had two or three motors in my plane, for I knew that they would not all fail at the same time.

Only a few days before I had had to make a forced landing. I believe every prudent pilot, when making difficult flights, plans and visualizes in his mind possible forced landings. This helps him to be prepared when

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the emergency actually arises, for it is not mere fumbling and blind luck which keeps an air pilot alive through many years of constant flying. I flew toward Foxe Channel and not toward Committee Bay, because I figured that the strong northwest wind was driving the ice fields toward the eastern side of Committee Bay, where ordinarily I should have flown. The same wind would free the east shore of Melville peninsula from ice and produce a long coastal channel about a mile wide, and I could make a forced landing in this channel of water—if landing became necessary.

When, an hour after our take-off, I saw that my conjecture was correct and that the east shore of Melville peninsula was free of ice, I was pleased. Frozen Strait and the mouth of Lyon Inlet with their wicked ice jams were none too pleasant to look at, but even here I spied a little ice-free inlet toward which I could glide from my altitude and take a forced dip and bathing if necessary. A little farther north I felt that I must sing a song and I sang it, raising my voice in an attempt to drown out the roar of my motor. My plane was the first one ever to thunder its way over those icy regions, and to startle their walrus and polar bear inhabitants. As I looked down on Barrow River, which flows into Foxe Basin, I was surprised to see a beautiful waterfall. It looked like a toy to me, but it has a drop of nearly ninety feet, and I reflected that the fish that leap down those falls must need parachutes.

Brother Beaudoin opened his eyes when we were above Parry Bay. He stretched himself and gave evident signs of having had a good rest. To shorten our

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journey we flew over Hall Lake, where the visibility was good. I pointed to a horseshoe-shaped island far ahead of us and said to Beaudoin: "If that is not Igloolik, I'll fly back."

Within twenty minutes we landed in front of our mission, which is dedicated to St. Stephen. The harbor is well sheltered. The church and mission house occupying the same building were only recently erected by the two missionaries, Father Etienne Bazin and Father Jean Marie Trebaol. While circling over the church to greet Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, I espied something on the ground below which filled me with joy. There, in plain view, were six barrels of gas and a barrel of oil. If we had not sent up this gas a year before, we never could have saved Father Cochard. I became convinced more and more that a kind providence was watching over our missionaries. I greeted my good friend, Father Bazin, by playfully tugging his beard. Father Trebaol's down was not long enough to be tugged, so I gave him a hearty clasp of the hand.

It was after six in the evening when we landed. Having been at my post steadily since two in the morning, I took a few hours rest, to be fit and ready for the last section of my flight. Father Bazin invited us to a supper at which he served us hot dogs, which were not so hot, and coffee and cookies. There was no bread. After the banquet Father Trebaol assisted Beaudoin with the tanking, while Father Bazin and I studied the map which unfortunately showed many large white areas representing unexplored territory.

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"We shall have to look into some of these blank spaces," I said, "and find out their secrets!"

Father Bazin could furnish little or no information. He was familiar with the southern route to Pond Inlet by way of dog sledge, but did not know the way to his closest white neighbor at Arctic Bay. The nearest Eskimos were doing their hunting at this time at a point about fifteen miles away from the mission. There was no time to row across the bay to visit them, nor was any boat available for such a jaunt, and the airplane could not be used because the other side of the bay was clogged with pack ice and did not permit a landing there.

I realized that the most difficult part of the flight was about to begin, especially if we ran into strong head winds. I should have to calculate with a supply of gasoline sufficient to carry me to Arctic Bay—a distance of two hundred and seventy miles and back again, even if I should have to face head winds blowing about fifty miles an hour. And I was certain that no gasoline could be obtained at Arctic Bay.

Though he was Father Cochard's nearest neighbor to the south, Father Bazin knew nothing of the priest's illness, while we, a thousand miles farther south, had received the news by wireless transmission from Arctic Bay, via a Nottingham Island relay.

At nine o'clock that night Brother Beaudoin and I took off once more. The sun was north-northwest. At midnight it would be exactly north. I had enough gas for five and a half hours. Within two and three-quarter hours I expected to land at Arctic Bay and in another

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two and a half hours I hoped to be back again at Igloolik. I should then have gas enough left over for another fifteen-minutes' flight. These were my calculations, but if I had followed them blindly, without watching the force of the head wind and the rate of my gas-consumption, I should indeed have reached Arctic Bay, but I should never have returned to Igloolik.

The landscape was so beautiful that for the time being I did not think much of the risks we were taking. To the right and the left of Gifford Inlet were mountains. A forced landing could have been made on the Inlet, but Eskimo tents were nowhere to be seen. Beaudoin was stretched out asleep at my side, with his head beside my pilot's seat. Fury and Hecla Straits were now before me, with vast stretches of pack ice and, beyond them, blue silhouettes of distant mountains and glaciers. Hiding behind thin clouds was the midnight sun—an unforgettable sight. I was the first human being permitted to fly over this arctic Eden where the Creator has lavishly squandered so much beauty and splendor. I was surveying an area of some fifty miles in diameter—a Cyclopean stage dressed up with glaciers and mountains, icebergs and pack ice, as with so many gigantic accessories. The huge setting and the symphony of colors radiating from it fascinated and held my eyes.

The map showed lakes above Gifford Bay but there were none. Then ground fog made its appearance. The wind whipped into a storm and, of course, it was head wind. The sun directly ahead, for which I was prepared with a special pair of dark goggles, soon was hidden behind black clouds and could no longer be seen.

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I had flown for two hours and had covered only one-third of the way. The head wind cut down unmercifully on our gasoline supply. The speedometer showed one hundred and twenty miles an hour. In reality, because of the sixty-mile head wind, I covered only sixty miles an hour. I prayed, and more minutes of painful deliberation followed. For a moment I thought of waking Beaudoin to ask his opinion, but the good Brother was asleep with a smile on his face. I could not bring myself to rouse him—he was so exhausted and ill. I realized that I had to make the decision myself. I resolved to return and felt that nobody in the world could change my mind. Slowly, in order not to wake Beaudoin, I made the curve. Soon I got out of the fog and the moon shone in my face. I was mentally exhausted. Even my motor had a melancholy sound, as if it were sulking because we were not to accomplish our task. When we again reached Fury and Hecla Straits, I looked down upon a world of ice. Beaudoin awoke and was surprised to find that the moon was in front of us. He rubbed his eyes. "This is not the sun, is it?" he asked.

My answer was brief: "We could not make it!" At 11 P.M. we landed again at Igloolik. Since two o'clock in the morning we had been on our feet, as well as on our wings. After a few hours sleep I decided to make another start, but this time alone—first, because I could take more gas; secondly, because Beaudoin had to get a good night's rest on solid ground, instead of in the clouds. I would take enough gas to last from seven to eight hours. The north wind could blow. My motor

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would buck it. Even if the wind should turn on the return flight I should still have enough gas to last me.

Because of low ceiling I could not take off till about eight o'clock in the morning. With full tanks and four barrels of gas in my cabin, my plane was a flying tank. At the start I almost had an accident. One of the gas barrels which I had placed on top of the others shook itself loose and rolled with a booming sound to a far corner of the cabin. The plane, having suddenly become tail-heavy, made a quick jump into the air and I promptly turned its nose downward. Luckily, the balance was at once restored. The barrel had fallen on its top and I could not see whether or not it had sprung a leak—it was an old barrel. Keeping my left hand on the steering-stick, I reached behind me with my right hand, turned the barrel around and was reassured, for its top was dry. At last I was ready for the North.

I flew over the same vast stretches of packed ice as the night before. After ten minutes I emerged into clear weather. When passing Gifford Inlet I flew along a small river up to Admiralty Inlet. Now I could no longer go wrong. There was a thin low ceiling, but it did not bother me. There was a very strong north wind, but I was sure it could not exhaust my supply of fuel. I flew over an Eskimo camp and tipped my wings. I was glad indeed that its occupants did not shoot at me. They might have taken my plane for a large bird, which would have meant much food for them and their dogs. Near Yeoman's Islands, and while crossing Moffet Inlet, I encountered fog but soon got out of it. The head wind was very strong now. I was flying no more than six

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feet above the water, because the wind had a much higher velocity above. Richard Islands are mapped as two but I saw only one. A short curve around the corner and there was my destination—Arctic Bay, five hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle and eleven hundred miles from the North Pole. It is the last trading post in the north and the northernmost mission in the world. Here mountains rise eighteen hundred feet into the icy Arctic sky.

I made a curve into Adams Sound, as though I had done it a hundred times. There were Eskimo tents at the entrance of the Bay. Great was the commotion I caused. Mine was the first airplane ever seen thereabouts. The Eskimos waved their hands wildly above their heads to welcome the "Flying Priest." The dogs howled in all pitches, looked up at me and wagged their bushy tails. Another curve and I entered the Bay. Directly ahead of me, at the end of the Bay, were the red and white buildings of the Hudson Bay Company. Close to them was a little white tent with a small cross on top. "In this tent," I thought, "I shall find Father Cochard, dead or alive."

Everything moved too slowly for me. I flew the "courtesy circle" around the mission tent. Was it for one alive or for one dead? Was I too late or was I in time? After the plane had been taxied slowly to the shore, two white men came walking down from the Hudson Bay Company building and smilingly extended their greetings: "How do you do?"

I answered with the same greeting: "How do *you* do?"



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Then I handed the gentlemen their mail and asked eagerly: "How is Father Cochard?"

Even as I put the question, my eyes were searching their faces for the answer. "He is alive," they replied, both speaking at once, "but he is in great pain."

"Thank God!" broke from my lips. "I will fly him to Chesterfield, to the hospital, and the Grey Nuns will nurse him back to health."

Father Cochard was in the house of the Hudson Bay Company. After lying ill in his tent without heat and with high fever, he had been found by Allen Scott, who had brought him into his house and taken care of him, as he would a dear friend. When Father Cochard saw me he could not speak for joy. He wept and pressed my hands. He could not believe that he was to be taken where he could get medical care. I had never seen this Father before, but in that moment we became friends for life. I let him weep quietly and I was deeply moved myself.

After he had calmed down, I offered him an orange. How his eyes brightened up! For the four years that he had lived in the Arctic, he had not even seen an orange, much less eaten one. He now ate three of them with relish—and I was glad to watch him, for it increased my hopes for his recovery.

"Just wait, good friend, and you will see how quickly we get you back on your feet!" I told him.

For the present, however, he was far from recovery. He could not sleep because his pains prevented him from lying still. His entire back was covered with bed-sores, so that he tossed about in agony. Truly he was

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a pitiful sight. While I was by his side, he whispered into my ear: "Father Schulte, when I offered my last Holy Mass and realized that I was too ill to attempt saying Mass again, I consecrated ten Sacred Hosts in order to be able to receive Holy Communion during my remaining days until the hour of death. Would you be so kind as to take these Sacred Hosts with you to Igloodlik?"

No one could have been prouder than I was at that moment. I walked to the little tent, opened the Mass kit and found the Sacred Hosts. I knelt down and adored our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I whispered a hearty prayer in this northernmost chapel of the world and then I placed the linen cloth with the Sacred Hosts folded within it, upon my heart. I became profoundly conscious of the special grace and distinction which was conferred on me. Unexpectedly I felt refreshed, calm, and convinced that my return flight to the hospital would succeed and that the suffering missionary would be cured of his illness.

Father Cochard was given a bowl of warm soup. Then he was dressed for his journey. The most difficult part of this operation was that of pulling his heavy reindeer coat over his head. I had heated the cabin, but I also wanted to prevent the patient from catching cold, and perhaps pneumonia, on his way to the plane. Father Cochard shook hands with all the Eskimos, Catholic and pagan alike, who came to bid him farewell.

The task of carrying him to the boat and rowing him to the plane was a sad and touching one. With the greatest possible care we lifted him finally into the

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plane, where I had spread my sleeping bag and a couple of reindeer skins, so as to form a soft resting place for him. His eyes showed extreme fatigue and exhaustion but they brightened with a smile of contentment when I clasped his hand to congratulate him on his brave behavior while we carried him to the plane. I wanted also to give him courage for the flight.

The surrounding scene was not unlike what one might see in Norway—fjords, mountains, and glaciers. The fog huddled in the valleys, but the north wind stormed above the mountain tops. I wanted to take advantage of this wind, for it can drive the fog before it, as a dog drives a flock of sheep. It was four o'clock when the plane rose from the waters of Arctic Bay. After I had said a prayer and made the sign of the cross, I dipped my wings over the Hudson Bay building, thus waving my thanks and farewell to the brave men whom I was leaving behind, and soon we were swallowed up by fog.

Climbing steadily to escape from it and to benefit by the north-northwest wind, soon we were five thousand feet above land and sea. A wondrous sensation of security and peace pervaded my body and soul. Ten minutes later we emerged into bright sunshine. Then I could have shouted for joy and delight. I was carrying a sick missionary from his bed of pain to recovery and new health. More thrilling by far, I was carrying the Sacred Hosts from a tent on Arctic Bay to the church of Igloolik—my airplane the Lord's chapel and my breast His resting place.

I could not burn any candles in my plane but the

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sun, the glorious lamp of heaven, lit at the beginning of time by the Creator, shone brightly in the sky. I had no blessed altar stone, nor a gilded tabernacle whereon I could have rested my Savior but He, the Savior, deigned to rest upon my heart. I had no choir to sing His praises but the motor hummed its most magnificent melody, two hundred and forty-five horsepower strong, to praise the Creator of the world, while the tears of joy in the eyes of Father Cochard and in my own eyes were expressive of the fact that the two and a half hours which it took us to reach Igloolik were for us a glorious and too short "Hour of Adoration" above the clouds. Never in my life had I meditated so lovingly upon the Canticle *Benedicite*. In these hours I not only prayed that glorious canticle but I lived it.

*All ye works of the Lord bless the Lord*—the Savior was with me and near me—where the Savior is, there His angels also are—I sensed this—angels were carrying a flying tabernacle through the air in silent holy adoration—*Bless the Lord all ye heavens*—around me the fierce Arctic sky, cradle of storm, pouring forth its exultant gales as a hymn of praise for the Creator who was mysteriously carried in an airplane—*O all ye waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord*—waters of the Arctic Ocean, of the fjords and inlets of the Arctic—the waves below me were bending and rolling in the same direction in which I was flying, forming white combs as if to accompany and aid me—*O ye sun and moon bless the Lord*—The sun was pointing me the way—standing to the southwest and moving toward south, whither I was following, while the moon stood,

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as if in reserve, ready to move into position the moment the sun should fail—and all the stars hovering modestly in their distant places prepared to give their light at their master's demand—*O ye ice and snow bless the Lord*—mountains, glaciers, never-melting snow below me, in unsullied purity, without breaking their unfathomable silence, flashed a greeting as we went by—*O ye nights and days, bless the Lord*—the long Arctic night symbolically confessed creation's dependence on its maker, while the sun betokened the perpetual light in store for God's children—*O ye clouds bless the Lord*—tenderly and affectionately soft white vapors brushed against the airplane which hastened on, out-distanced the clouds and left them to trail behind—*Ye whales and all that move in the waters, bless the Lord*—playing their part faithfully in God's plan they gave mute but eloquent testimony to His great power and unfailing providence —

It had taken me four and a half hours to fly from Igloolik to Arctic Bay. On the return flight the wind aided us. The surprised and terrified Eskimos below us, who had never seen a plane, gazed upward at the great and mysterious bird in the skies. My courageous patient had become very weak, although he had not been airsick. Many times I pressed his hand to encourage him. He smiled his thanks because he wanted to be kind to me. He had traveled the route from Arctic Bay to Igloolik by dog sled four times. It had always taken him from four to five weeks. We made the distance this day in two hours and a half. Often during the flight he looked down, and when he recognized

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some landmark he made a gesture suggesting travel by sledge, and smiled his wonder.

We made good speed and at six-thirty in the evening we were able to land safely at Igloolik. Our Brothers at the mission had been waiting for us anxiously and as soon as they saw that Father Cochard was in the plane a heavy weight rolled off their hearts. I did not, however, allow him to be lifted from the plane. We refreshed him and nursed him where he was, while the plane was being refueled. I carried the Blessed Sacrament into the chapel, gave thanks to Our Lord for the honor of having been allowed to carry Him in my plane, and prayed that in time I might be permitted to do so always on my Arctic flights.

At eight o'clock I started with Father Cochard and Brother Beaudoin on what proved to be the most difficult flight so far in my career—back toward Repulse Bay on the Arctic Circle. Had there been a weather report covering this territory, I should not have started. It was the second night flight within two days. I felt myself obliged to fly the patient as swiftly as possible to Chesterfield Inlet, and since the weather was fair at Igloolik, I took off and soared away.

In Parry Bay the air became musty. No sun, no moon. The night began. The visibility was bad. I had to come down to an elevation of one thousand feet, and then still lower to one hundred feet—till at last I was flying not far above the ice. I would have welcomed any possible place for landing but there was none. Now and then the moon blinked through the fog, only to hide its face again in unhelpful timidity. I turned on all the

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lights of the plane, the red and the green ones on the wings, and the white top and tail lights. I turned on the cabin lights in order to cheer my two passengers. We floated through the night like a regular airliner. But I must confess that I did not feel comfortable at all, for I reflected that if it were so bad here at Cape Penrhyn and Cape Wilson, how would it be at Blake Bay and Frozen Strait?

I flew now into a pea soup which thinned out in the nick of time. I confided our three lives to my gyro-compass. At eleven o'clock we were approaching Frozen Strait. I turned out the cabin light for ten minutes, so as to see better into the darkness. When it proved really to be Frozen Strait, I gave a sigh of relief, for I knew then that I could not miss my way home. How simple this flight would have been, had I had a radio station at Repulse Bay to assist me!

These pioneer flights are both difficult and dangerous, and one would not wish to undertake one of them merely for the sake of adventure. But when a human life is involved, it is a different matter. I shuddered at the thought of having to land here in Frozen Strait, an endless expanse of pack ice. A forced landing in a spot like this would be a gruesome experience. I was flying low over the ice. Turning sharply to the west I began to battle head winds. My supply of gasoline would carry me through, if only the fog did not get thicker. The magnetic compass jumped about like a dog in a kennel. I prayed that the moon might be shining when we landed. But this thought was a little premature. In the meantime I steered toward a group of islands

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which I seemed to recognize. Suddenly Beaudoin exclaimed: "Father, that other island over there is Southampton Island. I see it clearly. The islands toward which you are steering are shadows of the fog which hangs below the moon!"

"Nevertheless, Brother, I shall fly toward these shadows, because I must know what they are!" I told him.

A short time after this both of us felt relieved to see that the shadows really were the islands which we were seeking. And it was only five minutes more till we were above the mission of "Our Lady of the Snows" at Repulse Bay. Now the thunderous roar of our engine was rousing the sleeping missionaries and Eskimos from their sleeping bags and was offering them the new sensation of watching a fully illumined airliner with red, green, and white lights, flying over the mission. The moon, good old lady, was smiling again. I felt sorry that because of the west winds I could not land facing the moon and the path of light that it shed on the water. In the darkness I picked out one of the two islands and with the throttle left a little open, I landed. There was no other way. I had to make a smooth landing, as we could not strap down our patient.

With the greatest care we took Father Cochard to shore in a canoe. From there we carried him in a chair to the mission, where we prepared hot milk and toast for him. A soft bed was made of reindeer skins, but the poor man developed a fever and did not sleep all night from internal heat and pain. No wonder! The previous day had been too strenuous for him. It had been strenuous enough even for a healthy and robust person.



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I slept in my sleeping bag, and in my dreams I continued to fly through night, fog and ice. In the morning I heard church hymns sung in the Eskimo language. Father Lacroix was saying Holy Mass and all the Eskimos were receiving Holy Communion. My Holy Mass followed his. After breakfast Father Cochard was transported back to the canoe and to the plane with the same loving care that he had received at Arctic Bay the day before. At ten-thirty we took off for Chesterfield Inlet on the last leg of our flight.

There was a little fog, but the whole day was before us. In a few minutes we had climbed out of the fog and were soaring above it. Now the visibility became good. The wind changed at Wager Bay and at Cape Fullerton, but the plane kept steadily to its course and within two and a half hours from the time of its take-off it was over Chesterfield. I flew the customary circle around the hospital to honor the doctor and the Sisters, and then a second circle around the icebreaker *Nascopie* which lay anchored in the harbor. And then I landed alongside this steamer in order to give its passengers an opportunity for a good snapshot.

At the hearty welcome given to him by Bishop Clabaut, the Fathers, Sisters, and Eskimos, Father Cochard broke down and wept. It seemed unbelievable to him that he had actually reached safety. At the hospital he was examined by Dr. Melling and Dr. Roger, physician of the *Nascopie*. They found a serious kidney ailment. When he was given over to the care of the Sisters, five of them vied with one another in nursing him back to health.

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When Bishop Turquetil heard of the flight he wrote me this letter:

“Paris, August 21, 1938.

“Dear Father Schulte:

“Many, many thanks, dear Father, for the wholehearted aid given by you to a suffering missionary! Many, many bravos for your intrepid courage in instantly answering an urgent sick call. We all know how careful you are when flying under ordinary conditions but when it is a question of saving the lives of missionaries you do not hesitate to fly even in the worst weather. You, then, rely on Providence, and you do well indeed. It was Providence that guided me to call on you for help again this summer. Of course I could not foresee, nor even suspect, that you would have to fly to Arctic Bay, under such urgent circumstances, but I know that we ought to be prepared to help anyone, any time we can. With your aid and your plane we can do it at present for at least two or three months of the summer.

“May I add that it was providential that you met such a chance to save the life of a missionary, since there are some people who do not understand the scope and the usefulness of the MIVA, and who rather object to it and try to kill it. But what you have done for poor Father Cochard will, I hope, open the eyes of these people, close their mouths, and stop their pens.

“I bless you, dear Father Schulte. May St. The-

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rese, the Little Flower, always protect you, for she must be very pleased to see you helping the Eskimo Missionaries whom she loves so much.

“A. Turquetil

“Vicar-Apostolic of Hudson Bay”

The Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, sent me his special paternal blessing. When an air pilot distinguishes himself in the service of France he receives the Legion of Honor, in Germany the Iron Cross, in America the Distinguished Service Medal, in Great Britain the Victoria Cross. I received the blessing of Pope Pius XI. This is my “Pour le Mérite” which encourages and nerves me for future mercy flights with *The Flying Cross*.

## 2

### LITTLE SNOWBIRD

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A CHANCE visit to Eskimo Point, two hundred miles north of Churchill, enabled me to save the life of a four-day-old child, for whom there seemed to be no hope. I went up there with a message from Bishop Turquetil to Father Dionne, who had told me on an earlier visit that if I did not see the mission ship anchored at Eskimo Point on my next flight, I might assume that he was away on a walrus hunt, for he had to lay in winter supplies for himself and his dogs.

There was no ship in the harbor when I came in sight of the mission station. Still I was not sure that Father Dionne had left, so I flew around the buildings in a circle, according to our prearranged plan. If the missionary were at home he was to come out and wave. Otherwise I would not land, for the spot is unfavorable.

## LITTLE SNOWBIRD

I saw some Eskimo children, but there was no sign of the priest. Later I learned that he was at home, but had not heard the noise of the plane at first, and by the time he got outdoors and began to signal with his arms, I had already headed straight north and away from him.

Meanwhile, firmly believing that he had left to hunt walrus, I looked for him along the coast. Spying a few boats between Eskimo Point and Mistake Bay I came down close to them on the water. When a nearer approach made it certain that Father Dionne was not there, I did not anchor, but with a wave of friendly greeting to the Eskimos, was off again, flying north.

On arriving over Mistake Bay I noticed a small ship in the harbor, and a motorboat with two occupants just leaving. When I circled it in salute the boat turned and headed back toward the harbor. Feeling sure that Father Dionne had been found, I landed. My guess was wrong again. He was not in the boat, but one of its occupants, Mr. Voisy, of the Hudson Bay Company, said to me: "Father Dionne is not here, nor do we know where he is. But you, dear Father Schulte, are a savior in the hour of need. A four-day-old child is at the point of death. His mother is beside herself with grief. Only last year she lost her first child and now her second baby is in grave danger. Nobody knows what to do. Please help us."

I replied: "You are asking for medical aid, but I am not a physician—I am a missionary. What can I do?"

He answered: "You missionaries are skilled in so many ways that you surely can help in a case like this."

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I did not imagine for a moment that I could cure this desperately sick child, but I agreed to do what I could to get the only available physician. The Arctic is not like a civilized country, where one can get fast medical aid and hospitalization for the sick. In that territory of more than a million square miles, there is only one physician and one hospital.

I had an undescribable feeling of sympathy for the poor Eskimo mother and her sick baby when I reached them. I saw the little creature but could do nothing to help him, so I gave them both my blessing and hurried off to find Dr. Melling, and to bring him to their aid as quickly as possible. The hospital at Chesterfield Inlet was not far away by plane—only one hundred and fifteen miles. Flying there and landing on Hudson Bay, I jumped into a canoe and paddled hurriedly ashore. Almost out of breath on reaching the hospital I was also out of luck. Dr. Melling had left two days earlier on the *M. F. Therese* for Baker Lake, two hundred miles west of Chesterfield Inlet, to look after some patients there. I consulted Father Lionel Ducharme, the Superior of the mission, who is authorized by the Canadian Government to operate a small amateur radio station. He agreed to make every possible effort to get in touch with the *M. F. Therese*.

At last the operator on the boat responded. Dr. Melling was called to the microphone. Questions and answers flew back and forth. He tried to tell me how to treat the child until he could come himself, but I insisted that I didn't want instructions. He must come

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personally and at once. There was no other alternative. Speed was absolutely necessary, for the child was dying.

When he argued that it would take at least two days and two nights to get back to Chesterfield by boat, I said: "Never mind. I shall come by plane tonight to get you."

Still he argued, saying that he had never flown in an airplane, that the waves there were very high, that he doubted if it would be wise for him to go.

I answered: "The high waves cannot keep me from trying everything within my power to save a human life. Are you ready to fly with me, when I come?"

He agreed at last, so I decided to take off that evening to meet him. I had never before flown to Baker Lake, and knew nothing of that region. When I asked Brother Beaudoin if he would fly with me, he answered, beaming with eagerness: "I'll fly anywhere with you."

In order to have aboard somebody familiar with the territory I asked Father Thibert to accompany us, since he could render invaluable service as our navigator. It was his first venture in the air but he gladly joined us on our rescue expedition. We rowed out to our plane and warmed up the motor. I said a short prayer and made the sign of the cross on my forehead. We waved good-by and were on the wing.

The ship roared westward into the night, following the inlet. After ten minutes in the air I experienced my first engine trouble in the Arctic. One of the magnetos was out of order. For five minutes I tested and checked them. The magneto on my right missed regularly. Since it would have been inexcusable to attempt

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a night flight over unknown country with only one functioning, I turned back, sad at heart.

Soon we were at Chesterfield again. When we struck the water, night had already overtaken us. Our setback depressed me greatly, but half an hour later, when the darkness had grown so dense that I could not see my hand before my eyes, I began to think that perhaps the failure of the magneto was a hint by Providence that I should not risk my plane, my life, and the lives of my two faithful companions, by flying through such pitch darkness.

I put in a restless night, however, for I kept thinking continually about the child and his mother, and was tortured by the idea of being too late. I wondered why the magneto had failed just at the moment when I needed it, to help save a child's life and bring happiness to his mother. But that night Brother Beaudoin repaired the magneto. At dawn next morning Father Ducharme, Brother Beaudoin, and I were again in the air. We had to buck strong head winds and fly through many fogs.

The last news from the *M. F. Therese* was that it was heading back at full steam to meet us. In about two and a half hours we sighted her on Baker Lake. While circling her to effect a good landing, I fastened my safety belt securely, for the waves were high, though not so high as to threaten disaster. I landed at right angles to the ship, which had stopped. A boat was quickly lowered and rowed alongside the plane. Dr. Melling was on the mission ship. So was his wife. It



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was heroically unselfish on her part to let her husband make his first airplane trip under those conditions, and her prayers must have gone with us. Two attempts to rise from the water were failures. The waves were so high that we had to taxi into quieter water near the shore before we were able to take off. The wind was now behind us. In less than two hours we reached Chesterfield.

While Dr. Melling ran to the hospital to fetch the instruments he thought he would need in case an operation was called for, we filled our tanks with gas. I was waiting in the pilot's seat when he returned. In a few minutes we were in the air again. The motor ran beautifully, but the weather looked threatening. Heavy banks of fog drifted past us. Four thunderstorms, through which we passed, impeded the way to our goal. I flew an entirely new inland route, for I could not follow the coast of Hudson Bay in such stormy weather. The rain poured down in torrents. I flew low because I could see practically nothing ahead. Lightning and thunder followed each other continuously as if hell itself were let loose. Thanks be to God, however, I kept on the right course, and suddenly was whirring along above the buildings of the Hudson Bay Company at Mistake Bay. But the rain and fog were so heavy that I immediately lost sight of the ground, although not my sense of direction. Looking down on the harbor I had to admit that it was impossible to see or to recognize its surface because of the heavy downpour. Turning around I flew once more over the buildings of the

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Hudson Bay Company, guessed my height from the ground, gave my engine a little more gas, held my plane at absolute level, and came down blindly on the water.

It was a perfect landing. I don't believe that I ever came down more softly. The wind was strong, and its direction just right. Heading into it made an easy landing possible. Mr. Voisy rowed out to us and said with a smile: "Father Schulte, you have landed in the worst weather we have had for many weeks."

I asked immediately: "Is the child still living?"

"Yes," was the reply.

This was the happiest moment of my trip, for I felt certain that good Dr. Melling would do the rest. I had borne my share of the responsibility. Taking him by the arm, I said: "Hurry up, doctor; now it's up to you."

He jumped into the boat with his surgical kit, hastened to the dying child and his mother, and speedily performed the necessary operation, with Father Ducharme as his assistant.

Meanwhile Brother Beaudoin and I busied ourselves with the plane, and anchored it. When we reached the Eskimo's tent everything was over. The child lay peacefully at his mother's breast. The mother wept tears of joy, and the happy father squeezed my hand heartily. Everybody seemed to be truly happy and the parents asked me if I would baptize the child. The parents were pagans.

With Father Ducharme's help, I baptized the child, giving him my own baptismal name. The little Eskimo Paul is the first Catholic of Mistake Bay. He is to me

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also a proof that I made no mistake in my first landing at Mistake Bay.

By means of wireless telegraphy and an airplane, creations of the human mind, a life and a soul had been saved. I felt as if I were the happiest of all those who rejoiced that day, and I hoped that little Paul would grow up to be strong, healthy, and a good huntsman of his tribe. I should be even more pleased could I make him a good flying mechanician, or perhaps a pilot so that he might help his tribesmen as I had been able to help him. When, some time later, I met Father Dionne again and received his congratulations on my rescue flight, he said to me: "I had always hoped to give my own Christian name to the first convert at Mistake Bay."

I asked: "What is your Christian name?"

He answered: "My name is Paul."

When in turn I said: "That is also my name," he threw his arms around me and said: "Really, this is a welcome surprise. May the little Eskimo Paul lead them to the true faith and the true love of God!"

I find it easy to read God's providence in my rescue flight of six hundred and thirty miles. I had intended to land at Eskimo Point, not at Mistake Bay. Had Father Dionne come out of the house in time I would have landed there and would never have thought of Mistake Bay. The child undoubtedly would have died. This whole experience affected me deeply.

In the tent of reindeer skin in which Paul underwent his operation, lived a second mother with a sick child

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—a beautiful nine-year-old girl with soft dark eyes and coal-black hair. I have forgotten her name, but I called her Little Snowbird.

For a year this girl had been sick with an infected knee. No doctor had ever been summoned to find out what was wrong. The leg was bent stiff at right angles, and the knee was one large sore. The good mother had tried everything in her power to relieve the little sufferer. She had made poultices and used Eskimo medicines, but without result. Instead of improving, Little Snowbird's health had become steadily worse. The infection had spread; the knee had swollen badly, and was so painful that the child often groaned and almost fainted from agony. Meanwhile, the mother had watched her child with an ever increasing fear that she would lose her. She called her many pet names and bestowed on her the most tender caresses. The child's father did what he could to give her help and comfort by promising to catch a fine, big, fresh fish for her when he went hunting, but they were heartbroken to see her sufferings increase, and her strength consumed by fevers.

Dr. Melling examined the girl, who cried bitterly as he removed the bandages from her knee. He shook his head, saying, "This child is very sick and will have to be taken to the hospital immediately. I believe it is a streptococcus infection. She must have an operation soon or she will die. The pus will have to be drained out of that knee. Only in the hospital can the operation be performed safely and only the hospital Sisters can give her the special nursing she will need."

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I volunteered immediately to bring her with us in our airplane to the hospital. Father Ducharme explained our plans to the child's parents with kindly tact, and obtained their consent. I shall never forget how the father carried the girl in his arms to the water's edge, the mother walking beside them; how the canoe was paddled to the plane, and how we prepared a comfortable resting place for the child. Dr. Melling took the seat beside me. Father Ducharme sat behind, looking after the little one. Brother Beaudoin loosened the landing ropes from the buoy and gave the sign "All clear."

With a wave of greeting to the Eskimos, and a last smile from our patient to her parents, we were aloft. Little Snowbird made her first flight—toward recovery and new health. She was carried to the operating room as soon as we reached the hospital, well on toward evening. It was much later when the operation was finished, fresh bandages were on her knee and she was at rest in bed.

The exertions of those two days and the sleepless night between them had fatigued me a great deal, but for all that I waited until everything was over. Then I walked softly into the children's room, and looked at the beautiful Eskimo child asleep. Her black hair stood out against the white pillow, and there seemed to be a smile on her face. I stood there watching her, knowing that for the first time in her life she was sleeping in a real bed. Making the sign of the cross over her, I wished her a speedy and complete recovery. Meanwhile, my heart was filled with deep joy to see the

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lovely child sleeping so tranquilly. The look of pain had completely vanished, and one of deep peace now rested on her face, mirroring in some degree the calm of her innocent soul. Softly I whispered the prayer: "God bless you, Little Snowbird, and God keep you."

# 3

## FLIGHTS OF MERCY

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EARLY in August, 1938, Bishop Clabaut and Brother Beaudoin were with me, ready to fly from Chesterfield to Repulse Bay. I tried three times to take off. The waves in Hudson Bay were not very high, but strangely enough I could not get on the step. What was the matter? Was there something wrong with the motor? It ran as usual—had the right number of revolutions, did not sputter, yet something did not function properly.

I taxied up to a boat and asked my passengers to step out of the plane. I wanted to go by myself and find out what was wrong. Alone in the lightened plane, I succeeded in getting up on the step and also into the air. Still something was out of tune. The motor had no pep. Why not? I landed again and called my me-

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chanic to the plane. Beaudoin told me that he had filled the tanks with the new gasoline furnished by the Imperial Oil Company of Montreal. It had arrived only the previous day on the mission freighter. He had been wondering, however, about its color. It looked white instead of the usual blue.

"No, that can't be the trouble," I told him. "The Imperial Oil Company surely would not send us the wrong kind of gas. Perhaps the coloring matter was left out by an oversight, but the company must have sent us the right eighty octane gasoline that I ordered myself from the agent in Montreal."

We started again, came up on the step with some difficulty, and then into the air. We were about fifteen feet above ground when my confidence suddenly collapsed. It was as if the earth had slipped from under my feet while out for a walk. I was flying with full gas—the instruments indicated that everything was in order—and yet we were dropping. Unless something unforeseen happened, I felt that within a few seconds our seaplane would crack up on the rocks between the hospital and the houses occupied by the doctor and the Mounted Police.

The unforeseen did happen. Not far ahead in a straight line lay a small pond about two hundred yards long, with six or seven feet still between the plane and the ground. I could have whooped for joy. To shut off the gas and to land in the pool was the work of an instant. "Here we are," I cried, "but how shall we ever get out again?"

Corporal Kerr, of the Mounted Police, came run-



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ning with two constables, Robertson and Coughlin, to see if anything serious had happened. But we were laughing. Then Dr. Melling also showed up to see if there were any work for him, but before he got close I called out: "Nothing doing, Doctor!"

Nobody was happier over this than the good doctor himself. Then Bishop Clabaut came, along with Father Didier, Brother Paradis, and all the others. Corporal Kerr offered us the use of his twenty dogs to haul the airplane from the pond back to Hudson Bay. The dogs accomplished this task. A sled was shoved under each of the pontoons. Then the twenty dogs pulled, and Bishop Clabaut, Dr. Melling, the police, Jack Dixon, of the Hudson Bay Company, the Fathers, the Brothers and about twenty Eskimos pushed. Amid much shouting the plane was dragged back to Hudson Bay in about two hours. One of the funniest features of all was the way in which the Eskimo Alphonse ran in front of the dogs with a feeding trough, trying to coax them to follow him. The trough was empty but the dogs didn't know that for a long while, and the trick worked. They pulled for dear life. I would never have thought them so strong. Naturally we had emptied the gasoline tanks before the hauling began.

Next morning Beaudoin filled the tanks with blue-tinted gasoline from the previous year's supply. Then I made a trial flight. The motor was not at fault. The blame had lain with the gasoline, and with the Imperial Oil Company. The plane was once more our faithful friend, ready to carry us thousands of miles. I took off with Bishop Clabaut and Brother Beaudoin. Three

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hours later we landed in front of the Mission on the Arctic Circle. The little pond at Chesterfield Inlet is now called "Father Schulte's Lake."

A year earlier I had flown two Grey Nuns from Chesterfield back to Churchill. They were the Mother General, M. A. Cayer of Nicolet, and her first assistant, Sister Richard, who had gone that far north to visit the five members of their order who were devoting their lives to the welfare of the sick in Chesterfield's one hospital. They had come up on the mission steamer. It was a rough voyage, and both had been very seasick. When the Bishop suggested a return by plane they felt greatly relieved, for the trip would take no more than three and a half hours.

The night before we were to start they had all their preparations made. Evidently, however, they still had something on their minds. Several times they passed close to where I was working—nodded, smiled, and started to speak. But their courage always ebbed, and they walked on. Finally they approached Brother Beaudoin. Even then, as he told me later, they beat about the bush, asking a lot of questions but obviously not the one that was bothering them. He guessed shrewdly what they really wanted to know, but waited politely for them to come out with it. At last they blurted out the vital question: "What are we to do, if we become sick?"

He laughed heartily and said: "No one who flies with Father Schulte ever gets airsick. You need have no fear of that. Still, if something does go wrong, simply use the paper bags alongside of you in the plane."

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They seemed reassured. Doubtless their evening prayers were calm and peaceful. Next morning the leave-taking for the great adventure of their first airplane trip was touching and seemed endless. Their baggage was on board and the tanks had been filled. We were all ready, but still they lingered. They had to be asked to take their seats.

It was a beautiful day. The Sisters enjoyed the panorama, for the Eskimo country seen from above is more interesting than it is from the ground level. With a map I pointed out our route. All went well for a while. Then the weather roughened, and the Sisters became nervous. Apparently they did not know that I could observe them in a little mirror fastened in front of me. To make them relax, I told Brother Beaudoin a funny story, at which both of us laughed heartily.

Meanwhile, they whispered to each other. I could not hear what they said, but I guessed that they felt there was little danger when Beaudoin and I could enjoy a joke. As we flew straight on the storm increased, but it was not yet really dangerous. The Sisters, however, began their nervous whispering again and clasped their rosaries tightly. Then I asked Brother Beaudoin to relieve me for a while, that I might rest and read my breviary. He handled the auxiliary steering gear while I kept a close watch on my own. The Sisters once more seemed relieved, thinking and whispering, no doubt, that it couldn't be so bad when I relaxed in this fashion.

Just before we reached Churchill we had to dodge a heavy squall. A slight turn inland was enough. Soon

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we landed in pouring rain. Minutes later a terrific thunderstorm broke over Churchill. But we were safe. The Sisters had enjoyed their trip immensely. Neither of them had been airsick and neither of them ever will forget that wonderful first airplane flight.

Under the care of these Sisters, the hospital at Chesterfield is like a blooming oasis in a bleak desert of snow. They are always at hand to help Dr. Melling, who has to cope with many an emergency in the course of his work. One day he received a message that Okumaluk, second son of Itudsiayuar, King of the Igloolik Eskimos, was suffering from a bullet wound in the abdomen.

Okumaluk, father of five children, and best huntsman of the Igloolik tribe, had gone hunting with several companions. His sled, drawn by twenty dogs, was in front, speeding lustily over the ice. His favorite son, Nupvyark, seven years old, of whom he was very proud, sat beside him. Suddenly there arose a difference of opinion between the running dogs, whether about trotting, galloping or a sit-down strike, was not apparent. In any event, they were soon trying to make shreds and tatters out of one another's pelts. The team was a tangled heap of snapping, snarling, biting beasts.

Okumaluk dropped his rifle, leaped into the midst of the pack, and began to pull the dogs apart. Hardly had he reached them when a shot rang out from the direction of the sled, and he fell among the dogs, who still were fighting. The shot was followed by a child's cry. Nupvyark had inadvertently touched the rifle. When the Eskimos from the nearest sled ran up to help they

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soon realized that this one shot had ended the active career, if not the life, of their best huntsman.

Dr. Melling asked me if I would make a sick call flight of twelve hundred miles to Igloolik. He was anxious to get away at the earliest possible moment, in the hope of saving the chieftain's life. I told him I was ready. Next morning, we took off—Dr. Melling, Brother Beaudoin and myself. For the first hour we had splendid weather. Then, slowly but surely, the landscape took on the resemblance of a steam-filled laundry. I acted nonchalantly and made my passengers believe that everything was fine. Whether they were set at ease or not, I do not know. At Wager Inlet the sun broke through for about five minutes. That was the end of fair weather. On this ordinarily easy flight the south wind did not play fair with me. The trip soon was a matter of life or death. I did not dare fly up, for I did not know how high the clouds reached. I could not keep below the fog, for it dropped rapidly to the ground. The only other choice was to hug the shore line. Nothing in the world could have induced me to lose sight of it. The gyrocompass assured me that I was headed north.

At Beach Point it would be necessary to turn west. But how were we to know when we should turn? Visibility was limited, and in no time at all we were in a pea-soup fog. There was just one thing to do—give the engine full gas and at the same time swing the plane around until the gyrocompass indicated that we were going straight south. I flew several miles in that direction through dense fog, feeling like a mouse in a trap.

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I made one more attempt to fly to the north, but had to give up and go south again. We were flying low, just above the white caps of Hudson Bay. I disliked them because they meant an approaching storm. I turned the plane into the wind and sat down in the water. It was a good landing. The three of us were fogbound a short distance south of Beach Point. The fog was a forerunner of the pack ice of Frozen Strait, not far away. Brother Beaudoin stepped out on one of the pontoons to guard against the possibility of drifting against a rock. The tide was receding rapidly and there was some danger of going aground. In that case we would have to wait twelve hours for the returning tide to float us again. There was need of vigilance and we kept a sharp eye on our surroundings. After an hour and a half I got tired of waiting.

Observing that there was a chance to escape the fog, I gave the engine gas, brought the plane up on the step and climbed into the air, but quickly swung around to avoid the densest part of the fog. At that instant I spied a bluish speck to the northwest. At full speed, with my rudder set to climb, I aimed for that spot. In a few minutes we were above the fog. To north-northwest we could now see Repulse Bay, our first scheduled stopping point, and it was not long until we landed in front of the mission of "Our Lady of the Snows."

"That is enough for today," I said. "We'll do only one thing more, and that is, fill our tanks."

I was dead tired and rested for an hour. But when I saw how clear the sky was at three o'clock, I gave orders to make the plane ready to start for Igloolik. It

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seemed wise to leave Brother Beaudoin behind in order to have room in the plane for the Igloodik patient, if the doctor should decide that we had to take him to the hospital. At four o'clock Dr. Melling and I took off and after two and a half hours we landed at Igloodik.

The trip was delightful. The view of Frozen Strait, in particular, and of the vast ice fields in Foxe Basin, made a deep impression on us. As we circled over the village we could see the Eskimos running excitedly here and there. *The Flying Cross* was still a novelty. Even the dogs seemed to share in the excitement. On landing near the mission I greeted the much surprised Father Bazin.

"I did not expect you," he said, as he shook hands.

"All right," I replied, "then I can fly right back again."

"No, no," he protested, "I didn't mean that. I merely wanted to say that no airplane had ever reached this lonely place until a week ago, and now you have come twice in one week. I can digest walrus meat and frozen fish, but an airplane twice in a week seems too much."

We laughed heartily. When Dr. Melling told him the real reason for our coming he was the most delighted man in the place. The question then arose of how we were to get to the sick man. The camp in which he lived was twenty miles away. We could not fly there, because of the piles of pack ice on the far side of the bay. Neither could we cross in the rickety and leaky mission boat. The attempt would have meant suicide.

Strangely enough, the sick Okumaluk himself came

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to us, though he did not suspect we had come that far for his sake. He had heard the low humming noise of the airplane. Those around him told of the large bird they had seen flying toward the mission of Ataata Bazin. When he said he would like to see the big bird at close range, his tribesmen volunteered to row him across the bay in a whale boat. They loved Okumaluk and grasped the fact that a change probably would cheer him up. Two whale boats were quickly shoved into the sea, and loaded with tents, provisions, children and dogs. At midnight, or close to that hour, with the sun shining brightly, they reached the mission. We travelers lay sound asleep. I shall never cease to regret that we did not see those Igloodik Eskimos coming, nor watch them paddling around the strange bird as noiselessly as they could, lest he be frightened or annoyed; staring at him with cautious, dark eyes; questioning, wondering how the bird which had seemed so much smaller had swiftly grown to its present giant size, and touching the pontoons, the propeller and the rudders without knowing what they were. It would have been particularly good to observe the sick Okumaluk, and to hear him say: "Yes, these white men, they know everything."

He had been told by Ataata Bazin a long time before that it was possible for men to fly. He had listened with a smile and a twinkle in his kindly black eyes, as at a joke. He knew that he could not fly through the air, though he could hunt seals and capture walrus, and had no fear of wolves or polar bears. His midnight trip, therefore, was a great adventure.



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Confined to a sickbed and apparently debarred from the hunting game for the rest of his life, he didn't want to miss seeing the large bird. Gritting his teeth against the great pain he was suffering he had begged his brothers to take him across to the mission.

His request had been granted. He had seen the big bird. The midnight sun in whose light he had inspected it, was not much brighter or warmer than his glowing eyes, as they shone through the black strands of hair which hung to his shoulders. Satisfied at last, Okumaluk was carried into a tent which had been set up on the shore. It seemed to him that the pain of his wound had lessened.

Meanwhile four of us were fast asleep in the mission kitchen and we knew nothing at all of what was happening outside. The two missionaries at that post—Father Bazin and Father Trebaol—were resting on the floor of a porch, or anteroom. They had given up their beds to the visitors who had dropped out of the sky. Dr. Melling was asleep in one corner. As for myself—the bumps I got that night in my “four-poster” bed! It always takes me a long time to determine the proper pose and the exact balance required for a really good sleep. Snugly encased in my sleeping bag, I seriously pondered for a while the wisdom of strapping on for the night a parachute for safety's sake when the shaky, constantly threatening line of latitude on which I was lying should at last drop from under me. Sleep came in some fashion. Then my mind began to wrestle with the problem of how the sick Okumaluk might be brought most quickly to the mission. Half-

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asleep, half-awake, and dreaming, I was strangely interrupted. At first I thought it was music. Then I fancied that a child was crying. Suddenly the truth dawned on me. "Confound it," I said, "that must be a litter of puppies."

By this time I was able to distinguish five individual yelpers who seemed bent on serenading me all night long. Still I wondered where the puppies had come from. While I pondered over the problem, Father Bazin came out of his antechamber with a genial smile and whispered: "The Eskimos have come in two whale boats to inspect the airplane. The dogs belong to Okumaluk. And the gravely ill Okumaluk has come with them."

No one who lives in the civilized south has the faintest idea of the way in which an Eskimo dog can howl. The huskies in the Far North will join, without exception, several times each night in these ghastly serenades. Three hours of this night had already passed. After the hard work of the day before I certainly needed a few hours of sleep, especially as we had planned a six-hundred-mile flight and had to be prepared for emergencies and bad weather.

Father Bazin reappeared. He had come from sunny France into the cold Arctic, but he loved the Eskimos and everything that belonged to them. What the horse is to the Arab of the desert, the dog is to the Eskimo of the Arctic. Father Bazin understood me and he also understood the Eskimos. He smiled, and his smile disarmed me. I resolved to grin and bear it. Then we both went out into the bright, cold night to call

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the disturbers to order. Soon we had pulled the mother dog and two of her puppies from under the house. But the other three crawled into a far corner and cried, as if the end of the world were coming that night. A friendly Eskimo who joined us succeeded at last in reuniting the whole family. The mother dog thereupon was tied securely some distance off. Peace descended where turmoil had shattered the night. At last I was able to fall asleep in my fur bag.

Next morning I offered Holy Mass for the visiting Eskimos, while Father Bazin read prayers and led them in singing. There was great devotion. After Holy Mass the three missionaries and Dr. Melling sat down for breakfast. Father Bazin had prepared a pot of coffee and set before us some Clark's sausages, probably the last he had. I had been looking forward to those sausages. When they actually appeared, and I felt certain that they would not be taken away again, I said to Father Bazin: "I am sorry to give you a bit of news which may not be pleasant. In your big-hearted way you are giving us this morning some pickled sausages which probably are the very last in your larder. Of course you feel certain that Bishop Turquetil's ship, now on the way here, is bringing you new provisions, and will have among them sausages even better than these. I wish it were so. But, as a matter of fact, this year the little icebreaker is carrying only coal, petroleum and matches."

I tried to keep a serious face while I made my speech. Dr. Melling, at whom I looked, confirmed my statement with an equally solemn countenance, nodding in

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affirmation. Father Bazin jumped in front of me with an Eskimo knife big enough to slaughter a walrus, grabbed me by the chest, looked at me as sternly and implacably as an executioner about to slice off a criminal's head, and demanded: "Are you telling the truth?"

I answered his question quickly: "No! No! No!" for I did not want to be despatched by so amiable a man as Father Bazin.

While we munched our sausages the day's work was discussed from every angle. Breakfast passed serenely and tasted good. Right after it Father Bazin led Dr. Melling to Okumaluk's tent. A thorough examination showed that the rifle bullet had entered the right thigh from behind and had emerged in front to the left of the bladder. So far as I could understand the doctor's diagnosis, it seemed a serious case, but he did not appear worried or discouraged, though the patient's left leg was paralyzed. In consultation with Father Bazin, Dr. Melling decided that we should take Okumaluk to Chesterfield, where he would get proper care and attention, and probably would recover.

I was glad for the chieftain's sake. I liked him at first sight. Father Trebaol had already started to fill the tanks. I shook hands with all the Eskimos who had come across the bay. Among them was a handsome little boy with long black hair, just like Okumaluk's.

"Who is that youngster?" I asked. "I'd like to take his picture."

Bazin replied: "That is Nupvyark, who accidentally started all this trouble." I took several pictures of him.

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Shortly before eleven two of his brothers carried the patient to the plane. At eleven we were off amid much shouting and kindly farewells. The huntsman was not airsick, nor was he listless, but took great interest in the panorama below us. He had the distinction of being the first Igloodik Eskimo to fly in an airplane. How his chest swelled, and how many wonderful things he would have to tell the tribesmen! We flew along the coast at four thousand feet, and saw several Eskimo camps. Okumaluk marveled how far and how much he could see. He planned to return next spring over the same general route, but by dog team. For that trip he would need weeks, if not months. For the time being, two hours and a half were enough.

A heavy fog in the direction of Frozen Strait forced me to veer slightly to the southwest to keep clear of it. Thus I chanced to fly directly across Melville Peninsula. It was the first time that anyone had gone over it from end to end. I was delighted to learn that it is a very practicable route. Many fresh-water lakes afford excellent landing places, preferable to Foxe Basin. They are not affected by the tides, nor have they the severe storms and high waves of Hudson Bay. So long as they are roomy enough for a decent take-off they are ideal.

Dr. Melling had had enough of forced landings the previous day. Sitting at the plane window he looked unconcernedly at the fog which we had dodged. Repulse Bay lay before us, and he knew that the fog would do us no harm. Here, however, we ran into an uncommon but very real danger, created by the very calmness of

## THE FLYING PRIEST OVER THE ARCTIC

the air and sea. There were two ships in the harbor, the *M. F. Therese* and a fishing boat. Not a ripple moved across the water. It was a perfect mirror. I did not like it. Two good friends of mine, aviators, had met death prematurely by miscalculating their altitude over glassy water. A pilot can hardly keep his bearings under those conditions. He cannot see the water, only the sky, above and below. If he has nothing to guide him and only a hope that he will recognize the water's surface before it is too late when he dives to make a landing he will undoubtedly go full speed into the water, and in a jiffy all will be over with him, his plane and everybody on board. When flying over a mirror sea, with no land in sight, a pilot has to rely on his artificial horizon, the spirit level, and on his altitude meter; and he has to fly at a safe height to guard against possible contact with the water. If he is wise, in attempting to land he will first fly near an island, a ship, or the coast. This bit of advice I owe to my flying friend, Alex Schneider, one of the most expert of Canadian pilots, and I followed it on this occasion.

As I circled over our mission ship, I kept wishing that it would send out a motor boat to create a few waves. That would be enough for me. Apparently nobody on board realized my predicament. Hardly anybody even stirred beyond getting out a few cameras for pictures of the landing. Since I had to land and a delay wouldn't help, I breathed a prayer, reduced the engine's power slowly, headed for the *M. F. Therese*, and flew around her, dropping lower and lower until I was on a level with the bridge. Knowing now my exact height over

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the water, I leveled the plane, speeded up a bit to keep from bumping, for my sick passenger had no safety belt, and after what seemed an eternity, we glided softly to the water.

Dr. Melling, happily, had been totally unaware of danger. We landed, took care of Okumaluk, and went visiting for a couple of hours. At four we took off for Chesterfield. For a whole hour the weather was fine. Then a fog loomed ahead of us, and to right and left. Short of Wager Bay I had to turn back, leaving the fog behind, but returning to the mirror sea of Repulse Bay. This time we could land without misgivings. I could gauge our height by the water's edge, for I came down close to the shore. Determined to stay where we were until wind dispersed the fog, we carried Okumaluk into an Eskimo tent, took care of him as best we could, and then provided for ourselves. On the second day a weather report came by wireless from Nottingham Island: "Clear, cold and easterly winds."

"If the weather is going to be clear, then let's be off," I said.

The weather was clear at Repulse Bay. We started with a strong wind from the east on our flank. For two hours all went well. Then the wild dance began, with rain, fog, and violent east winds, which developed into a storm and ultimately into a hurricane which lasted four days. From Cape Fullerton I kept our nose close to the shore, right to the end. Chesterfield was an hour away.

But it proved to be a difficult and exciting hour. The plane bounced about like a rubber ball under the

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buffeting of the storm. Down below, the mountainous billows seemed to roar. Anxious glances inland for a small lake, which might offer a safe landing, could not pierce the clouds and fog. We were in the gravest danger, but reassurance came in a few minutes, as I recognized the hospital, looming through the fog less than a mile in front of us.

Then came the most critical moment of our trip. The breakers were running high, lashed by a fifty-mile gale. To attempt a landing among them would have been stupid and fatal. Back of the mission was a little pond about half a mile in length from north to south and two hundred yards in width. I had never tried a landing there because I thought the pond too small. But there it had to be this time, willy-nilly. To make matters worse, we had to land from west to east in the two hundred yards—the shortest dimension of the pond—for we had to come up into the wind. Dr. Melling sensed our danger. So did the people at the mission, who were astonished to have us come back in the middle of a hurricane. Mrs. Melling was one of the group. I called to her husband, "Please watch our patient so that he'll not get hurt if we make a poor landing."

He said he would. Then to lessen his fears, and perhaps to bolster my own courage, I held the altitude rudder with my knees for a moment, rubbed my hands gleefully, as if on a lark, and said boastfully, like a youthful braggadocio, though I didn't believe a word of it: "Now watch me make a fine landing."

What followed happened very quickly. With one



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hand on the stick and the other on the throttle, I aimed straight north along the west side of the pond. For a moment the rocks seemed desperately close. At the widest point of the lake, I gave the engine gas, made a quick right-angled turn into the wind, and sat down on the water. The wind was now our friend. The harder it blew, the better it served as a brake. In fact, I had to step on the gas a bit so that we should not be swept back on the rocks when the motor was cut off. Nothing else happened. There was no bump, no jolt, no catapulting of our patient through the window. He hadn't even rolled over. Dr. Melling shook hands with me, saying: "You are the best pilot in the world."

While the people of Chesterfield rushed out to welcome and to congratulate us, I remembered where thanks were due, and in my heart I offered a genuine and sincere prayer of gratitude to God.

# 4

## THE FLYING CROSS

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ON OUR first attempt in 1937 to fly from Repulse Bay on the Arctic Circle to Pelly Bay, Brother Beaudoin and I nearly lost our lives. We had been asked to take Father Henry to that post, as well as the year's provisions, which this poorest of all the missionaries would need. There was no gasoline at Pelly Bay nor anywhere along the route. Consequently, we had to go there first with a load of gasoline, for we would not have been able to get back had we gone there immediately with our passenger and his provisions.

Our flight was straight toward the magnetic pole and we passed the ruins of the stone building in which Dr. John Rae, physician of the Hudson Bay Company and famous explorer, spent a winter. From this building, which housed his supplies while he himself lived

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in a near-by igloo, he set out on his search for the lost Franklin expedition. Within a period of ten years forty rescue expeditions, costing close to \$4,000,000, had been sent out by the British Government, by Lady Franklin, by the United States Government, and by interested private parties. But only in 1854 did the first definite news of the tragedy reach the outside world through Dr. Rae, who had learned of it from the Eskimos of Pelly Bay.

Dr. Rae made his journey by dog sled. We were the first to follow the same route by airplane. I could not rid myself of visions of the ghostly Franklin trek as I flew over this area. Dr. Rae needed many weeks for his trip by dog sled. By rights we should have completed our flight in two hours, but we ran into stormy weather. For the first half hour conditions had been good. Then the weather turned wild. We were over hilly country on which the clouds hung low. The temperature fell rapidly. For a while we flew through fog.

In an hour we reached Committee Bay, but could not see it because of the bad weather. To make sure of our location, I dived as low as possible, but even then we could not avoid the clouds and fog. Suddenly I realized that the entrances to the bay were all choked with packed ice. The whole western shore was blocked. As far as I could see there was nothing below us but ice, nowhere was there enough open water even for an emergency landing. In front, black as night, a northern storm was approaching. To the left were mountains whose tops were hidden in clouds. The

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temperature was below zero. Soon I had a new worry, for I saw ice forming on the wings.

The only alternatives were to turn back as quickly as possible, or to attempt a landing. But where could we land without cracking up the plane? Certainly no one would have found us, and we could not have lived on our cargo of gasoline. Of necessity, we headed back the way we had come, dodging the clouds as well as we could. While no doubt it was colder above than inside or below them, it was less dangerous, for there was not so much risk of being covered with ice. I watched like a lynx and slunk along in the valleys between the hills, keeping clear of the clouds as best I could until at last we reached Repulse Bay again. There Brother Beaudoin began knocking the ice off the wings. It was a quarter of an inch thick. We were both depressed that our trip had been a failure. Had conditions been favorable we should not have required more than two hours each way.

Next day Eskimo children were playing on the ice along the shore of Repulse Bay. Winter had arrived.

It was not until a year later that I succeeded in reaching Pelly Bay. Then I made six successive visits—some of them under most miserable weather conditions. My sole purpose was to bring to the missions there—the poorest in all the world—bread and provisions for a year in advance. I shall never forget my first landing there. The mission at Pelly Bay is the most lonely of all our stations in the Far North. Father Henry founded it and since the spring of 1938, Father Van der Velde, his faithful companion, also has been

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stationed there. Again Brother Beaudoin was my traveling companion, and this time we took off from Repulse Bay in the best of weather.

Everything went well until we reached Committee Bay. Here we flew into a mist so enveloping that it was almost ground fog. For half an hour I followed the coast line of the bay; then, turning inland, I flew straight toward Pelly Bay. Spying a small river I decided to follow it closely because the fog was so heavy, and I wished to be ready for a landing in case it should become still thicker. I followed every bend conscientiously until suddenly I saw a tent on a hill and right below me on the river someone in a canoe. For two hours we had not seen a soul, so this seemed to be an invitation to land. A friendly Eskimo and his sons came over and greeted us. We then visited his tent to meet his wife and family. His dogs were half-wolves. They glowered at us so fiercely that we waived an introduction to them. The elder Eskimo explained to us by means of many signs scribbled in the sand that Ataata Henry and Ataata Van der Velde were not far away.

We were only about half a mile from Pelly Bay, but because of the fog we had not been able to see it from the plane. After an hour's interruption of our flight we whirled off again, and eight minutes later were over the mission buildings of Pelly Bay, which stand at the mouth of the river, close to the one we followed on our cross-country flight. Among the people staring up at us I saw the red beard of Father Henry and the black beard of Father Van der Velde. The

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Eskimos never have beards, so there was no mistaking them. I saluted the mission by circling over it, and then landed close by Father Van der Velde, who had been setting out his fishing nets. I clambered out of the pilot's seat onto the pontoons and waved to him. His red beard swayed in the wind. He wore a blue Basque cap and a white sweater.

Brother Beaudoin and I now began to unload on the shore all the good things we had brought with us for these impoverished missionaries. First of all there was mail from home—the first to reach them in a year. There were letters from his mother for Father Van der Velde. One of them had been written a year earlier; the other had made the trip from Belgium to Pelly Bay in three weeks. I had carried it from Churchill as air mail.

Then the two missionaries ate some of the bread which I had brought. Father Henry jestingly said that it was the first bread to arrive at Pelly Bay since the deluge. With it were butter, sugar, salt, flour and other eatables. The two men were overjoyed to find that they had not been completely forgotten by the rest of the world. "Vive Père Shou-out," they kept repeating. It was cold in their house, as they had neither stove nor coal. This was their daily lot, even when the temperature dropped to seventy degrees below zero. To submit willingly to this requires a touch of the supernatural spirit; the natural spirit would scarcely endure it for long!

The two missionaries laughed at me and made fun of me because I felt so chilled. They said: "We drink

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fish oil and seal oil, and that keeps us warm." As for myself, I cannot smell the stuff, much less drink it. I felt sincerely ashamed, facing those two men. I had been away from civilization only a few weeks; they had been removed from it for years. True, I ate fish with them by day, but I drifted back to other things in my dreams, such as visions of steaks, Vienna schnitzels and steins filled with the best Pilsener! When I got to the point of unfolding my napkin and with mouth watering fancied myself sitting down eagerly to the finely prepared meal, I woke up and realized that, alas! I had been dreaming. I could only swallow the saliva which had gathered in my mouth, roll over in my sleeping bag and tell myself that it was good discipline to be torn away from all the comforts of civilization and to experience the hardships which other men bear contentedly for the sake of their faith. Looking at the two Fathers it occurred to me that perhaps more of us should at times seek the simple life without modern conveniences, in place of civilization at its fastest stride. They seemed living examples of absolute self-denial. Their menu for breakfast, lunch and supper is fish. For beverages they have water and a little tea and coffee. Nothing else. They have no bread, no butter, meat very rarely. Their only variety is to eat their fish fried, boiled or raw. )

The Eskimo fare, of course, is still more primitive. They drag a fish from the water, kill it by cutting its neck, slit it open, clean it out and eat it raw. They gave a demonstration for me while I was in Pelly Bay. The fish were trout, excellent and tasty. I tried them

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myself—fried, not raw. An Eskimo laughed at me for my scruples and assured me that the fish tasted better raw. But I shall never be an Eskimo in my eating habits!

What impressed me most during my stay at Pelly Bay was the fact that the two missionaries seemed to be the happiest men in the world and the best of comrades. Their living quarters were of the utmost simplicity. They lived in a stone house, built as a single room and used for all purposes—bedroom, kitchen, parlor, chapel and pantry. Floor and ceiling were of wood. There was no wood on the walls, only the cold stone. A table and clothes-closet had been built out of boxes. The sleeping bunks were hard but everything was clean. There was no broom. The dust had to be swept together with the hands. A picture of the Blessed Virgin, cut from a magazine, was fastened to the wall and below it a few flowers had been stuck in a crack, but they were artificial, of course. There are no natural flowers in the Arctic, except for about three weeks in the year. On the writing desk, which was an up-turned packing box, stood two pictures—the mothers of the two missionaries. Their two mission crosses hung on the wall as well as a picture of the Pope, also cut from a newspaper.

In front of the altar was spread the skin of an ice bear. The stable of Bethlehem could not have been poorer than this stone cottage. There was neither ox nor ass to contribute a little heat. In place of hay and straw there were cold stones. But just as piously as the shepherds entered the stable of Bethlehem, the Eskimos come to worship here. All the Eskimos of



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Pelly Bay have become Catholics and they receive Holy Communion each morning unless they are away on hunting expeditions. This is a great consolation to the missionaries. We spent two nights at Pelly Bay and on the day after my arrival I said the public Mass. All the Eskimos were present and received Holy Communion.

My airplane was the great sensation of Pelly Bay that day. It was the first one that had ever been seen there. Not even a ship had ever arrived and got away again safely. Near at hand was the wreckage of a vessel that had drifted ashore—mute witness of a lost scientific expedition of many years ago.

I shall never forget how Father Henry wanted to reward me with a special token of gratitude. When we were alone, he said, "I have something very special for you." He moved aside several boxes, and with a large knife tried to pry a board out of the floor. At last he succeeded. There below was his "safe." He took from it a quart bottle of the best French wine and said to me with heartfelt solemnity that brooked no contradiction: "Dear Father Schulte, please take this wine. I have kept it for five years to be used in case of sickness."

I was dumbfounded. This missionary, whom I regard as a saintly man, who has voluntarily given up a thousand things which we regard as necessities in civilized countries, was ready to hand over to me the one thing which he had preserved as a treasured remedy and help in days of illness. I thanked him and took a little sip. I could not possibly have brought myself

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to take it all, for who knew but that Father Henry might soon need that wine to cure an ailment?

One day I made two flights from Repulse Bay to Pelly Bay with provisions for the missionaries. On the second trip I saw Father Van der Velde and an Eskimo fishing from a small boat. I thought it fortunate that the only boat at the station should be out on the bay ready to take aboard my store of supplies, for it meant that I would be able to make another trip and come back with a third load of provisions. Landing alongside the boat, I opened two doors and without leaving the plane handed out my cargo. The unloading took exactly six minutes. We were all delighted that it went so fast and without mishap.

There were plenty of fish at Pelly Bay—fat sea trout, three feet long. At Repulse Bay the fishing had been poor that season. With the thought of making a contribution to the larder of the mission of "Our Lady of the Snows," I begged Father Van der Velde for four of his large trout. He readily gave them to me, rejoicing that he could thus show his appreciation and gratitude for the provisions I had brought.

Without misgivings I laid them beside me on the floor. They were dead, or at any rate seemed to be dead, for their necks had been slashed with a knife when they were caught. What harm could they do? With glad anticipation of the welcome awaiting us at Repulse Bay, I turned the engine over, said good-by, opened the throttle to half, then to full, and I was on the step. A sharp north wind forced me to head straight for the mountains. Out of the water, the plane began to

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climb. At that moment, as I gave all my attention to my steering gear so as to turn safely away from the mountain, a slithery, ice-cold phantom slapped my face.

The shock was staggering, for I was sure a minute before that I was all alone in the plane. There was no human being with me. Could a spirit box my ears, or jump into my face? What sort of spook could it be that had terrified me into stepping on the left lateral control, thereby tipping the plane so that the left wing came within a hairbreadth of hitting the water? I soon saw that one of my four giant trout had reasserted his love of life and liberty. By rights he should have been dead. A long Eskimo knife had given him the *coup de grâce*, but for all that he was very much alive. I don't know why he had jumped directly into my face but if he had smacked me only a little more impetuously, the chances are the plane would have cracked up, and no one ever would have known the cause of the disaster. Certainly no one would have suspected that a dead fish had given the Flying Priest so real a scare that he had nearly lost control of his plane. In any event these were the first fish to make their way from Pelly Bay to Repulse Bay by air line. They were given a place of honor on the tables of the missionaries, the traders of the Hudson Bay Company, and several Eskimos.

Father Henry told me on that visit of the way in which the Eskimos made fun of him when he first went to Pelly Bay. "How are you going to make your living?" they asked him, for he had nothing among his belongings that suggested the equipment of a fisher-

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man. He carried only the most necessary clothing, his rifle, a supply of cartridges and a fishing net. Father Henry said nothing but watched the Eskimos closely as they caught fish with harpoons or hooks. Since he had no bread and only a few preserves, he knew as well as they did that he would have to depend on fish as his main food. He felt he must catch some in his own way to show the Eskimos that a white man might know even more than they. When he displayed his fishing net they shook their heads incredulously and laughed. But at low tide he spread his net at the mouth of a small river. The tide turned, the net was covered with water and the Eskimos began to laugh gleefully at Father Henry's predicament. They expected the net to be carried away by the tide. Great was their astonishment when the tide receded and they saw the net intact, with forty or fifty large sea trout, three feet long, flipping around in it. Then it was Father Henry's turn to poke fun at the Eskimos and to force from them the admission that a priest could catch fish too.

On the following day I flew back to Repulse Bay. On the return stretch the weather was clear, the plane light, and my mind was burdened with no further piloting responsibility other than that of getting home safely. I was glad to have done a good service to the brethren at Pelly Bay and now I could meditate. Here, in the Arctic, I was flying over the frozen top of the world, but my thoughts circled the globe to south of the Equator, where other MIVA pilots were flying to save human lives and immortal souls and were carrying provisions to isolated mission stations. I thought of

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William Linkholt in South Africa; of William Schafhausen in New Guinea; of Leo Verhulst, who was preparing for South America; of Friedl Lang, whom I expected to bring to the Arctic on my next expedition, and of a hundred others who had volunteered for this same work and begged to fly with us. And I could not help praying that the time would come when all the most forsaken and isolated mission districts might have the service of mission airplanes, and extend the wings of *The Flying Cross* around the globe.

I thought of Europe and Asia, of bombing planes flying over cities, bringing terror into human hearts and tears of despair into human eyes. I was glad that instead of bombs my plane carried bread; that instead of inflicting wounds and strewing death, it brought health and life by carrying the physician to the sick and transporting ailing patients to the hospital.

My plane arrived at last over the mission station of "Our Lady of the Snows" and, swooping down in a beautiful spiral, straightened out and settled gently in the bay. Then I anchored it and walked to the lonely little mission church to ask the aid of God and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and to pour out my gratitude, my hopes and longings for my mission of everlasting love in this world of everlasting ice.

# 5

## THE BISHOP SURVEYS HIS DOMAIN

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**B**ISHOP TURQUETIL made his first flight with me. Twenty-five years earlier he had founded the Eskimo missions and now was their Bishop with headquarters at Churchill. He asked me to fly him from there to Chesterfield Inlet, four hundred miles north, where the first Eskimo synod was to be held, and Father Armand Clabaut was to be consecrated his auxiliary.

Bishop Turquetil had often told me that there were three poles in the Arctic—the accepted North Pole, in which he had little interest since there were no souls there to save; the magnetic pole, located on the Boothia Peninsula; and the third pole of lowest temperature,

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located at the northern end of Hudson Bay, in the neighborhood of Chesterfield Inlet. According to his calculations, this territory is the coldest on earth—the average of the minimum readings is lower there than in any part of the world. Certainly no spot in the Arctic is so completely and mercilessly exposed to storms as Chesterfield Inlet. The missions at Pelly Bay, Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet are favored by near-by mountains and glaciers which give them some little protection. But at Chesterfield Inlet, when the temperature drops to fifty, sixty, and even seventy degrees below zero, life outdoors becomes unbearable. The breath congeals into a dust of tiny ice-particles and breathing becomes torture. In any part of the face not covered by the furred cowl one feels a sensation like the jabbing of knives. The cold is so intense that the wooden walls of the mission building rumble and groan as if in danger of bursting apart. Even during the summer, when the snow has melted, the earth there remains frozen except possibly for the depth of a foot.

It was not the most extreme weather, of course, when Bishop Turquetil and I took off for this region by plane. When I asked him if he was afraid to fly, he stroked his long beard and said "No." Since this was my first flight to the northern missions, before the take-off I asked him if he were familiar with the territory over which we were planning to fly. He laughed, clasp- ing his beard and twisting his mustache to the right and left and said: "Now, dear Father Schulte, you are amusing. I have traveled this stretch of land for twenty-five years and know every rock, bay and island."

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I answered: "That is all I wanted to know, Your Excellency. It is very reassuring to be told that you can recognize every landmark. In flying we never know when we will run into bad weather. Your experience and your knowledge of this locality may prove to be of the greatest service."

We started with gas tanks filled to the brim, for we wanted to go straight through to Chesterfield. After an hour we ran into bad weather. Not to lose sight of the salty water of Hudson Bay, I throttled the motor to lose altitude. The fog became so heavy, however, that everything was blotted from sight. Making up my mind to land, I asked the Bishop to fasten his safety belt.

"But why do you want to land?" he protested.

"Because I am responsible not only for myself and my plane, but also for Your Excellency's safety," I told him. "I am landing because of the fog and the poor visibility."

When he retorted: "But that is only a cloud!" I replied: "My dear Bishop, I am familiar with such clouds and I always land before the ground fog cuts off sight of the water below me."

With the gentlest, most disarming smile I could muster, I added: "Moreover, here in the air I am Bishop. After we have landed you'll be Bishop again. Now I am going to land."

Soon we settled down on the waters of Hudson Bay. The coast line was obscured. To offset the drifting of the plane before a northwest wind, every now and then I turned the propeller over briefly. The weather



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was cold and somewhat unpleasant. Within half an hour the wind broke up the fog and carried much of it away in tatters. In the distance was a small island, for which I headed at once, through and over what was left of the fog. We reached it in a few minutes. I wanted badly to know which one it was. Basing my calculations on what I knew—the velocity of the wind, the duration of my flight, the length of our enforced rest on the water—I judged that it was Marble Island. Still I could not be sure.

The sun, of which we caught occasional glimpses, was my guide. While I had not for a moment expected Bishop Turquetil to be able to tell me just where we had made our unscheduled landing, since there was no coast line in sight, yet I now felt sure that he would be able to help me by saying exactly, and confidently what island lay beneath us.

"Is this Marble Island?" I asked.

After a close scrutiny he said: "No! It is not!"

"What island is it then?"

"That may be Walrus Island!"

This answer gave me something of a scare, for if he was right and we had only got as far as Walrus Island, our gasoline tanks would probably be empty before we could reach Chesterfield. In that event we would have to make a forced landing, with vaguely known hazards and the possibility of serious consequences. However, I more than half believed that the Bishop was wrong. Naturally I did not argue the point, nor tell him what I thought, but contented myself with a non-committal "All right," and kept flying north.

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The sky cleared. Each minute I became more confident that it was not Walrus, but Marble Island, that we had just left behind. Within ten minutes I was absolutely sure of it. I made no comment, but reflected with interest on the fact that so experienced a man, who undoubtedly knew and could recognize every rock, bay and island, along this route when he saw them from a dachshund's perspective, could lose his bearings as soon as he made his first flight. Had I let myself be guided by his directions I might indeed have been obedient, but we would not have reached Chesterfield.

Scrutinizing the shore closely for Eskimo tents, I was delighted to see some on a narrow point of land. I asked the Bishop to look down, but he could not see them. That sight put me completely at ease. "Now," I said to myself, "if the gas does give out, I shall ask these Eskimos to fetch me some more."

Suddenly, far ahead I spotted a tiny speck, faintly outlined against the horizon. I cried out: "Look, Bishop, there is Chesterfield right in front of us."

Straining his eyes, he answered: "That cannot be. Chesterfield Inlet is much farther away. Besides, I don't see anything at all."

I said nothing in reply. All the while he kept looking intently at that growing speck. Ten minutes later he grabbed my left shoulder, shook me so hard that my high-strung, sensitive plane shivered and bucked, and shouted into my ears: "You were right, that is Chesterfield."

Then he leaned back in his seat contentedly, stroked

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his beard and mustache with glowing satisfaction, and enjoyed to the full the thrill of looking down on the mission of Chesterfield—the little church which he himself had built, the Hospital of St. Theresa, the sheds and houses of the Hudson Bay Company, and of the Mounted Police, and the reindeer tents of the Eskimos.

When the plane offered its usual salute, the peaceful settlement came alive. Looking like ants, people poured out of every building and rushed down to the water's edge. I landed in the bay and taxied to the shore. The day's experience was a delight to me. It had fully convinced Bishop Turquetil, one of the best missionaries and pioneers in the Arctic, that airplane service is of high practical value in the Eskimo-land to which he is so devoted.

In addition to the Bishop, Dr. Melling and several of the mission Fathers, I took an Eskimo on his first airplane flight, thereby making other members of his tribe green with envy. We took off one August day in 1937, and he showed no sign of fear, but a great deal of reserve. I flew wherever he directed me, making sure that he saw everything he wanted to see. With wide open eyes he scanned the country spread out below him like a huge map. He had very little to say but smiled now and again. After our landing no one was more curious than I to hear what tales he would tell about his trip. We asked him what had been his greatest thrill during the flight. He blinked his dark slanting eyes at us and said with a smile: "All the time I was on the lookout to see if there

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were any reindeer roundabout, but there were none to be seen."

The rascal was not at all interested in the wonderful view which the flight had offered him. His thoughts had been practical ones and he had told himself: "If I am allowed to fly in the plane of the 'Father who has wings' I have a chance which no other man of my tribe has had. I can survey the whole territory and I shall know afterward where there are reindeer to be hunted."

On the following day he disappeared from Chesterfield. I am convinced, in spite of his disavowal, that he did see reindeer, but the cunning fellow did not wish to spread the news.

# 6

## SHIP IN DISTRESS

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THE mission freighter *M. F. Therese* is a steel vessel of two hundred tons, equipped with a two-hundred-and-fifty-horsepower Diesel engine. She is a semi-icebreaker and carries into the eastern part of the Arctic many tons of coal and other provisions—the total annual supply of the missions. The task has to be performed once a year between July and September. Starting from Montreal, her route is down the St. Lawrence, along the coast of Labrador, through Hudson Strait into Hudson Bay, north to Repulse Bay, Frozen Strait, and Foxe Channel, and then back again through Hudson Strait. The trip takes three months. Captain and crew are hired for each trip. Since the ship registers more than one hundred tons the captain must have all his patents for high-sea navigation. The ship was a

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gift to Bishop Turquetil from a generous and devout donor who stipulated that her name should remain unknown.

I saw the *M. F. Therese* for the first time at Churchill in 1937. She was then new and had only recently crossed the Atlantic from Holland to Canada. She was the pride of the Catholic missions and Bishop Turquetil was determined to do everything he could to keep her from being wrecked in the pack ice, which is the greatest danger to Arctic shipping. When a ship as small as the *M. F. Therese* is unlucky enough to run into a constantly heaving and moving ice field, she may be exposed to the pressure of many square miles of pack ice. In that case she may easily be lifted out of the water and shoved on top of the ice, or she may be crushed.

When I looked down on her from the plane, *The Flying Cross*, as I guided her through the pack ice, she seemed like a tiny fly or an even tinier gnat. When a ship is caught in the Arctic pack ice she seems to be held irretrievably between two merciless giant claws of white ice. Unless she escapes that icy grip in the nick of time, she is lost.

Bishop Turquetil honored me with the task of guiding her through Frozen Strait above the Arctic Circle. Until then few ships had succeeded in making that passage. Sir W. E. Parry was the first navigator to go through while on his second journey in search of the Northwest Passage. He remained three years in Repulse Bay before success crowned his efforts. In 1875 the ship *Discovery* duplicated Parry's achievement. In 1903 a whaling boat passed through Frozen Strait and

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shifted its shore station from Big Island to Repulse Bay. Eight whaling boats were wrecked in Hudson Bay. One of the dangers of Frozen Strait is that of being trapped and held by the pack ice for two or more years. In 1934 the mission freighter *Piux XI* was thus held prisoner there.

No cautious captain ventures today to sail through this strait unless he has received favorable reports about the prevailing ice conditions. But who is to give him these reports, since there is no weather station along that thirty-mile stretch? No Eskimo will volunteer to make an investigation in a sealskin or walrus skin canoe. A dog-sled trip is out of the question. Consequently there is but one possibility—the airplane. An aviator can get complete and accurate information, and make a detailed report. It is best, of course, for the ship's captain to go aboard the plane, and get a bird's-eye view of the scene for himself. I have assisted two different captains. The first was so conservative that he refused to entertain the thought of joining me on the flight. The second was a daring soldier who enthusiastically took his seat in the plane and made his own survey.

The first exploration flight over Frozen Strait was made by me on September 10, 1937. The MIVA plane, *The Flying Cross*, is thus far the only plane to have flown that course. After a conference with Captain Levesque, commander of the *M. F. Therese*, I took aboard his ice pilot, Father Duplain, who has a good knowledge of the northern waters and has been in command of small ships. Brother Beaudoin also went along. The flight from Repulse Bay to Foxe Channel

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and back took an hour and a half. It was unfavorable flying weather because of poor visibility, but we were lucky. We were able to see that Frozen Strait was almost free of ice. Naturally this report pleased the captain.

For the next two days, however, there were fog, rain and snow. The captain did not make the venture. But early on September 13 he pulled up anchor and late that evening the radio transmitter of the *M. F. Therese* sent back word that the ship had passed through the Strait safely at full speed. Thus the mission freighter belonging to Bishop Turquetil, was the first ship to go through Frozen Strait and get to her home port in Quebec in the course of the same summer. All the ships that had previously gone through had been trapped and some had been held for years before they managed to return over the same routes. Had I not made the survey flight and reassured the captain, he probably would have had to sail around Southamptton Island to get safely to Igloolik. That would have meant one thousand miles instead of thirty by way of the Strait. When the Explorers' Club of New York learned of this flight, V. Stefansson, the president, elected me an active member.

An August 19, 1938, I guided this same ship once more through Frozen Strait. Her commander that year was Captain Cox, who had been for many years first officer of the government-owned icebreaker *McLean*. He is a soldierly character who won my heart when I first met him. When I suggested that he join me on the flight to see the ice conditions for himself, he



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accepted the invitation instantly, and brought along a special map, with a heavy lead pencil to jot down his observations. The third member of our party was my efficient radio engineer, Henry Haffmans. He was overjoyed at being permitted to fly with us, and equipped himself with a Leica camera with which he took some excellent pictures.

The flight lasted two hours. The previous year Frozen Strait had been practically ice-free, with the exception of four or five small bergs. This year it was jammed with drift and pack ice. From high up it was easy to see that a ship might readily be caught and crushed by the ice in a dead-end channel.

It was, however, equally clear that there were open lanes through which the ship might be piloted safely, if the captain could get hold of an accurate chart. The previous year the ship had made the run from Repulse Bay to the far end of Frozen Strait in one day, but this year the trip took three days and nights. The captain had to keep a close watch on the direction taken by the pack ice and also on the tides which kept it in constant motion.

The real difference between a bird's-eye view of an ice field and its appearance from the bridge of a small ship came home to me a few days later, when I began to fear for the fate of the ship. In the interval I had carried a sick man from Repulse Bay to Chesterfield. When the *M. F. Therese* radioed that the ice in Frozen Strait had become worse, I filled my tanks to the limit to keep in the air as long as possible. I flew

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from Chesterfield in a north-northeast direction toward the farther end of the Strait. At first I sent no wireless messages. When I did send them, on becoming convinced that the ship was in trouble, there was no answer until I had actually sighted the vessel and was circling over her in salute.

I wondered what was wrong. The ship was no longer heading east but west. Steadily circling over her, I called through the microphone, asking over and over again: "Why are you going back?"

An answer came, but I could not make it out. I called again: "Please speak very slowly. I cannot understand you. Why are you going back? Answer me!"

There was some reply, but still I did not hear it clearly. As I flew around the ship I saw that she was heading into a cul-de-sac of ice from which she would never be able to extricate herself. She was in obvious danger of being caught and crushed. At first I had no intention of landing. But communications with her radio station were so poor, and her danger so great, that I decided to make the attempt. Did the radio operator realize that his ship was in danger, and might this knowledge be the excuse for his nervousness? My last message was: "I shall land in order to assist you."

But where was I to land? In my excitement I forgot to pull in the antennae, which were promptly lost in the pack ice. Since I was alone in the plane and it had been considerably lightened by a three-hour consumption of gas, I landed without trouble. When I had taxied close enough to the ship for the sailors to touch one

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of the wings, I cut off the motor and asked Captain Cox the question which I had asked repeatedly from the air: "Why are you going back?"

He replied: "We have been going forward and backward for the past two days."

Since I had made a fairly good survey of the actual conditions, I warned the captain definitely against sailing farther into the blind alley toward which he was heading, and invited him to accompany me again to take note of the changed location of the ice fields. He declined, on the ground that he could not leave his ship in its present plight.

My own situation, however, was critical. Captain Cox saw this and said: "If you don't start soon you will never be able to get out of this ice again."

Just then a huge block of ice bumped against one of my pontoons and made the fragile plane shiver and tremble as if it were being caressed by a giant. I said to the captain: "I shall fly twice very low over your ship, and then head exactly in the direction in which I know you will be able to get out of the pack ice into open water. Follow my lead and you will soon be out of danger. Good-by and God bless you."

While the seamen skillfully shoved the left wing of the plane away from a large chunk of pack ice, I started the motor, put the plane in reverse, and taxied through the open stretch of water to the edge of the ice. Turning the plane's nose toward the clear channel, I fed gas to the engine and opened the throttle wide, hoping to make an absolutely clean, sure start. When it had

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reached a speed of seventy miles, I was able to lift the plane out of the water, for it had only an hour's supply of gasoline and was comparatively light. Obeying the slightest pressure on the rudder, *The Flying Cross* soared upward. I had a feeling of great relief as I looked down again from a safe height on the dreary waste of pack ice. Flying, as I had promised, in the direction of safety, I had the satisfaction of seeing the ship follow me out of the ice field.

Captain Cox was very grateful for my aid. That evening he thanked me over the radio and expressed admiration for my feat. The official radio commentator on board the *M. F. Therese*, Father Duman, O.S.B., a botanist of the Catholic University of America, reported the day's events in his broadcast of August 23, 1938:

“Notwithstanding our hopes and prophecies of the last two evenings that we would next greet you from Foxe Basin, here we are, just at the end of Frozen Strait. Our good ship *Therese* has certainly been crashing the ice for the past two days. Last night a brisk wind arose, and we spent most of the night anchored to a large piece of ice. The wind was moderate again this morning. About ten o'clock we hit a particularly tough spot. This pack consisted of very large thick pieces of floe ice, jammed together with quite some wind-pressure. Just how we succeeded in getting through, I'm still trying to figure out. At noon, finding our way completely blocked, we anchored for an hour or so to one of the larger pieces. Finally, the way

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opened a little, and we started crashing our way through again. We kept this up all afternoon at what seemed impassable masses of ice.

“About four o’clock in the afternoon Father Schulte’s plane appeared, circled several times, and made a beautiful landing amidst the floating ice. I’ve seen men in circuses do high dives into a few feet of water, but this was the first time I saw it done with an airplane. Father Schulte informed us of the ice conditions in the remainder of the Strait; then, as the ice was fast closing in on the small open space in which he had landed, he taxied around a few scattered pieces, opened her up, skimmed across the short stretch of open water and took to the air, a landing and take-off as spectacular as one could ever hope to see. Thank you, Father Schulte, for your help. I took some pictures of both your landing and take-off—if they turn out well I shall send you some.”

On August 25 of that year, I made a difficult but, I am sorry to say, unsuccessful attempt to fly to the mission of Pelly Bay. I went alone to have as much room as possible for the cargo of provisions. There was no getting through. The clouds were too dense and high to rise above them. Below, a fog dropped down into the deep valleys. I had to return to Repulse Bay and unload my five hundred pounds of food supplies. It was then seven o’clock in the evening. At eight an alarming message came through the air from the *M. F. Therese*, over the Hudson Bay Company’s

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radio station at Repulse Bay. The message was from Captain Cox:

“Impossible to proceed farther than Cape Wilson. Coast blocked with ice. Can you fly me to Igloolik? Important. Will meet you in bay near Cape Wilson. Chances for reaching Igloolik without improved conditions very unlikely. Would like to fly over and thoroughly investigate before reaching final decision. Safe place for landing in bay near Cape Wilson. Regards. (Signed) Captain Cox.”

The message was repeated several times: “CYMT of the *Therese* calling the Flying Priest.”

It came through in two languages—English and French. Since the captain did not know where I was at the moment, he also called the Government Stations in Nottingham Island and Chesterfield Inlet and begged them to relay the message. I felt very much exhausted after my hard day's work. This message increased my nervousness and excitement so much that I had to turn off the radio. I could no longer listen to the appeal of those poor men in distress with a storm shrieking outdoors. It was impossible to take off at the time. My empty gas tanks could not be filled because of the high waves. The storm, a wicked blusterer, came from the north and howled all night.

At four o'clock in the morning we were at our posts, but were not ready to start until half past twelve. When the flight began I was worn out. The radio had been kept tuned in all morning, but no further mes-

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sage had come through. Why didn't the *M. F. Therese* call at least once every hour? Could there have been a disaster in Foxe Basin? Was the ship already lost and crushed by the ice? The ship's radio remained silent.

Leaving shortly after noon I flew northeast, passed Frozen Strait on my right, crossed Lyon Inlet, and then followed the coast to Cape Wilson. For half an hour after the start I called the ship by radio every five minutes: "The Flying Priest calling CYMT." All the while, as I fought forward through fog and storm, I held the microphone and repeated my message: "The Flying Priest calling CYMT."

There was no word or sound in reply. At Cape Wilson the weather cleared. The range of visibility was about forty miles. The position of the ship had been given as near Cape Wilson. But no vessel was in sight. I flew back and forth at close on two thousand feet altitude, searching the district systematically, and continuing to send out my call. I flew north, east, and along the coast in turn, looking for wreckage or a possible pile of salvaged goods on the shore. Not a soul was to be seen. The Bay of Cape Wilson offered an ice-free harbor—closed in, however, except on the west by approximately forty to fifty square miles of packed ice. Close to the shore was a strip of open water about a mile wide. My fears for the ship mounted steadily. Perhaps she had ventured into the pack ice, had been crushed and had sunk during the night. Choking the motor I flew low, close to the ice, and carefully scanned the whole area around Cape Wilson again.

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An eerie sensation came over me as if I were flying above the scene of some strange tragedy. At Repulse Bay three hours earlier the weather had been rough and stormy; here, only two hundred miles away, there was complete calm. I kept on desperately, sending out my call: "The Flying Priest calling CYMT."

At last I had to bring the search to a close. Sadly I turned south. I now flew along the coast which I had previously missed by going overland to reach Cape Wilson and the endangered vessel all the more quickly. For half an hour I kept straight south until suddenly I spied something far ahead. It was the *M. F. Therese* which I had been calling for two hours without getting any answer. She had left Cape Wilson and gone south the previous night. The radio transmitter of the ship had been out of order, so that there was no chance of calling me.

I landed beside the ship in smooth water, smiled pleasantly, and even cracked a joke. There was no air of cheerfulness aboard the ship when she stopped. Everybody seemed depressed. At first I thought the captain had miscalculated his position. That, however, was not the case. I taxied alongside the boat and shouted hello to him. I said: "You called me, and here I am! What can I do for you?"

Bringing the mail for Igloolik with them, Captain Cox and Father Girard slid over the side of the ship into the cabin of my plane. They intended to fly over the ice fields with me, and to make a close study of the route to Igloolik. We all flew north and had a chance to acquaint ourselves with the ice conditions as far



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as Cape Penrhyn. Here we ran into ground fog which reduced visibility to zero. There was no use going on blindly. Our one aim was to observe the ice conditions. Consequently we returned to the ship. The captain was satisfied, for he had found out that the ice had broken up.

After we had landed again beside the ship I was so tired and hungry that I asked the captain to let me anchor my plane, and go aboard the *M. F. Therese* for a good meal—I knew that they had polar bear cutlets—and after that a good sleep. Though he certainly did not begrudge me these things, he said “No.” He thought it his duty, for, as he pointed out, with the turn of the tide the ice might quickly close in, and then the plane would be lost.

I rubbed the weariness out of my eyes, shook all the hands I could grasp, started my engine, gave her gas as fast as she could take it, and flew off to the southwest. It was a two-hour flight back to Repulse Bay. I had to pass again through bad weather, fog and storm. It was a disagreeable experience—to be shaken and thrown about so that my head bumped repeatedly against the cabin ceiling. But my faithful plane had been a true comrade and was now carrying me back safely to the mission of “Our Lady of the Snows.”

In his official report of the incident to the Canadian Government, Captain Cox wrote:

“At 8 A.M. on August 25, the pressure of the pack ice was in the direction of the coast. There were no harbors along the coast. It was advisable,

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therefore, to turn south, and at 2 P.M. we stopped north of Winter Island. At 3 P.M. Father Schulte, the Flying Priest, landed near us—having come in answer to our appeal of the night before, to aid us to study more fully the ice conditions around Cape Penrhyn.

“The survey flight to Cape Penrhyn was carried out with good success to everyone’s satisfaction. The ice conditions were seen to be not unfavorable. What we needed now was a strong westerly wind, which would free the coast of ice. All the ice had begun to break up, but it still clung together as packed ice. The good will, collaboration and readiness of Father Schulte to give every possible aid at any time, both day or night, deserve the highest admiration.”

# 7

## THE AIRPLANE BREAKS LOOSE

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ON MY way from the Arctic to New York City I stopped at Eskimo Point on September 2, 1938, to return a sleeping bag of reindeer skin. Besides, we had to deliver letters from the Far North, and to pick up the mail which the Catholic and Anglican missions, the Mounted Police, and the Hudson Bay Company wished to send south.

It was too late to fly on to Churchill, so I decided to spend the night with my good friends, Father Jim Dunleavy and Brother Beaudoin. Late in the evening a fog came up, but the Mounted Police who were invited to supper prophesied fine weather for the morning. Their prediction pleased me, for I trusted the judg-

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ment of these experienced and weather-beaten men, but what followed persuaded me that I never again would ask the police for weather bulletins.

Brother Beaudoin, who took tender care of the airplane and avoided needless risks, moored *The Flying Cross* securely with two fifty-pound anchors. The weather was tolerably good, and the water calm, but the harbor of Eskimo Point is peculiar. It can become wild and turbulent all of a sudden for no apparent reason. I slept fairly well that night on the strength of the police officer's prediction of good weather. Toward morning, on awaking, I heard a sharp whistling about the house. It made me apprehensive. But the waves were not high and the plane did not rock much, so I crawled into my sleeping bag again and sought to still my vague fears. Somehow I could not sleep. The northwest wind was plainly whipping up. The whistling became a siren wail, the house shook and trembled. In a little while there was a moaning and screaming as if a thousand demons were having their tails pinched or stepped on. All thought of sleep vanished. With a few leaps I reached the kitchen window, from which I could watch the beach and my plane. What a tossing and dancing! The wind had shifted a little and was coming from the north. The waves were like wolves with foaming mouths. Brother Beaudoin remarked: "I cannot look at it; it makes me sick."

He turned away. I asked about the anchors and he replied: "If they hold, then all is well."

But they did not hold. Observing the fact, Father Dunleavy pointed out that the plane was moving slowly

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nearer the shore. Unfortunately he was telling the truth. It was actually drifting. I couldn't help seeing that myself. First one anchor had broken loose; then the other. Rushing out, I shouted at the top of my voice: "The airplane is coming."

In my mind's eye I saw it already smashed to pieces on the shore. Though I was wearing all my furs, coat, cap and boots—for it was cold—I ran for dear life. Nobody in the Arctic, before or since, ever saw me run as I ran that morning, when all my hopes seemed about to crash at the water's edge. It was little more than one hundred yards over rocks and loose stones from the house to the shore. Dunleavy and Beaudoin came after, but I was far ahead. The breakers were about six feet high. I ran into the water as far as I could. The second roller knocked me flat. I sprawled in the water and swallowed a mouthful. How salty it was! My dry and thirsty furs greedily soaked up the nasty stuff. The plane was coming ashore, now down in the trough of the waves, now on their crest. One of the pontoons was jammed against a rock. The plane began to swing around and the wind caught it broadside. The situation was critical and dangerous. The right wing lifted clear of the water. The right pontoon was ready to follow. If it did, all would be lost. Instinctively, I threw my whole two hundred and fifty pounds (I am not exactly a featherweight) on the right pontoon, with forty or fifty pounds more of salt water which my fine furs had imbibed. That three hundred pounds of ballast saved the day. At the

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same time we shoved the nose of the plane into the wind—I at the pontoon, Dunleavy and Beaudoin at the tail.

At no time in my life have I shouted so many orders. Of course, nobody heard them, with the wind howling and the waves breaking over our heads. But we had saved our plane; that was what counted. There was more to be done. To keep it safe we had to get the heavy bird on the shore. There were but three of us—everybody else was asleep. As for myself, I was about done in. A hundred and thirty hours of Arctic flying in four weeks had made my stomach squeamish. The smell of the brine as I stood in four feet of water, and the copious draught I had taken when first knocked down by a breaker, changed fretfulness into rebellion. My stomach gave everything back. I took a lot of punishment. My legs were numb. I was clouted on the right and on the left. From behind, heavy breakers pounced on me, one after the other. It wasn't a fair fight. The mutinous pontoon, dancing up and down, back and forth, did a lot of unforeseeable foul slugging and hitting below the belt. A training like that ought to be a good toughening exercise for champion prize fighters. A little bit more of it, and I would have been counted out. Slowly, inch by inch, we got the airplane close to the shore. The waves helped us. There we were balked. We could not pull or push it out of the water. I shouted to Father Dunleavy: "Please run and get help from the Mounted Police, who promised us good weather for today, and from the Hudson Bay Company, and from the Eskimos. Bring as many men as you can get."

## THE AIRPLANE BREAKS LOOSE

It was seven o'clock in the morning. Brother Beaudoin was hanging on to the tail of the plane and I was lying again on top of the right pontoon. It was really the first time in my flying career that my weight was a great asset. I had often been chagrined that I was much heavier than an air pilot had any right to be, especially one who did most of his flying in a comparatively light plane in the Arctic where every pound counts, and cuts down the amount of provisions he can carry, but on this occasion it was no disadvantage—indeed it was a bit of good luck to be heavy. I rejoiced in it, and chuckled over the extra forty pounds provided by my thoroughly soaked furs. Every pound helped to keep that pontoon where it belonged and to save the plane.

Dunleavy soon was back with his rescue squad. As we saw them coming Beaudoin and I thanked God fervently. We were both almost worn out, for we had worked desperately, and the cold had penetrated even to our bones. Now we felt sure the plane would be saved. With Dunleavy were William Heslop, manager of the Hudson Bay Company's store, and his assistant, Donald Willis. Behind them came Corporal William Robinson and Constable John Watkins, of the Mounted Police. Robinson had proved a wretched weather prophet—a "poor tree frog," in the lingo of air pilots—but I knew his strength, resourcefulness and stalwart devotion. Once, he had covered sixty miles by dog sled on a winter day, running alongside of it for thirty-five miles of the distance.

The resident Anglican missionary, Donald Marsh, and his wife, were also in the party. Awakened by the

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racket which Dunleavy made in rousing the others, they did not wait to be asked, but rushed to lend a helping hand. They were ready now to repay me for having carried their mail back and forth by air for the past two summers, without any cost to them.

The rescuers had brought ropes and pulleys. When these were attached to the plane and adjusted, the work of saving *The Flying Cross* went on rapidly. Robinson and Watkins plunged into the cold water alongside of Marsh and myself, to hold the nose of the plane down, while the Hudson Bay Company men, Beaudoin and the Eskimos, with all the zest of Volga boatmen, pulled the big bird, tail first, out of the water. It was slow work and hard work, but we all kept at it strenuously and methodically, until at last the plane was safe on the beach.

While we worked, the wind—a sixty-mile gale—had done considerable damage elsewhere. Several small vessels had been driven ashore and wrecked, and a small outbuilding belonging to the Hudson Bay Company had been destroyed. Happily nobody was in at the time, for all hands were busy in their work of mercy.

Once *The Flying Cross* was out of danger we had to take care of ourselves and get into dry clothes. In the water first, longest, and deepest (I had gone completely under at the outset), I was given first chance in the mission kitchen. While I stayed in the water and was buoyed up by excitement I did not pay much attention to the low temperature, though I did feel numb. But when that stiff north wind got a chance to go to work on me from head to foot, I felt cold all



## THE AIRPLANE BREAKS LOOSE

through. At Eskimo Point we needed furs to be comfortable, and we needed them dry. What a relief it was to get my temperamental clothes-zipper under control, to shed my waterlogged furs and to improvise a shower bath for rinsing off the salt! Father Dunleavy had a hard time of it trying to get clothes for me to wear during the twenty-four hours needed to dry out my own. But he succeeded in finding some into which I was able to squeeze, and so made me comfortable.

Meanwhile I rinsed the salt out of my furs—for salt corrodes leather. Neither they nor I were any the worse off for our prolonged salt-water bath. My breviary, however, gives evidence of the experience. It was in one of my pockets as I rushed to the rescue of *The Flying Cross*. It was there as I plodded back to the mission, but oh, how changed! Once slim and slender, it was now puffed up and swollen. Though thoroughly dried out in the bread oven, and serviceable again, it has never regained its original proportions.

# 8

## VISITING THE ESKIMOS

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WHEN I made my first landing at Chesterfield Inlet, I picked an Eskimo named Alphonse from the crowd and asked him to help me fill my tank. Conditions there were quite different from those I meet at a modern airport, where eager attendants with tank cars flock about me and offer to relieve me of all further work and worry. When I make a landing anywhere in the Arctic—on water in summer, and on snow in winter—I have to do all the work myself. My gasoline must be shipped on icebreakers a year in advance. It must be stored at the various landing places, usually near the mission stations, the trading posts of the Hudson Bay Company, or the Eskimo settlements. I am unable to fill my tank from the fifty-gallon barrels when I am alone, so Alphonse's aid was welcome.

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I was surprised to see with what skill he tackled the job, although I know that the Eskimo has a keen mind and extraordinary talents for practical things. Without being asked to do so, he knocked the coals out of his pipe, for he realized that fire and gasoline do not go together, and that when they do, something is apt to get blown into the air. Nor did he wish to endanger me, whom he called "The Father who has wings."

While busily engaged on my plane, he did not forget to keep an eye on his boys who, along with other youngsters, were up to tricks along the shore. Eskimo boys are eager for all sorts of pranks. These lads threw stones at the dogs and shouted with glee when they scored a hit. Meanwhile the dogs, held back by their chain, barked a hellish chorus of protest. The Eskimo boys were exuberant with health and strength, and the dogs were enraged at not being able to nip the calves of their rascally tormentors. But these same strong dogs, I was sure, would give proof during the coming winter that their masters could absolutely rely on them.

Eskimo children, who greatly resemble Chinese, but are less neat and clean, make surprising remarks. I was the target of two of them on this occasion. The children at Chesterfield Inlet are on such friendly and informal terms with the missionaries that they would unhesitatingly use the priests' backs as convenient chopping blocks if they had any kindling wood to cut. Luckily, there are no trees in the Arctic, not even one big enough to provide wood for a toothpick.

The children and I were playing "cat and mouse"

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out in the open, and the little rascals were jabbering away at a great rate, joking and shouting back and forth. They kept calling me "The Father who has wings." Suddenly the whole crowd rushed up to me with a thousand questions. One little fellow kept his finger pointed at me while he made gestures which indicated that he would like to cut me into four parts. Father Ducharme laughed heartily and finally asked me: "Do you know what the youngsters are saying?"

"How can I know?" I replied, "I don't understand a single word."

"They are telling one another," he informed me, "'We can make four Eskimos out of the Father who has wings.'"

These children, seemingly jolly and carefree, learn quite early the stoical approach to life that is characteristic of their parents. The Eskimo has a strong will, with which he coldly and firmly controls the more tender feelings of his heart. Among the men it is regarded as a point of honor never to show a sign of weakness or of indecision. They are stoics under all circumstances. Indeed two Eskimos stand out in my mind as examples of extraordinary equanimity displayed in the midst of great hardship and misfortune. One of them was more than sixty years of age and the father of ten children, and I cannot forget how once I waited a full day for him to return from a hunt. He had set out early in the morning with nine dogs and his sled to catch seals and had returned in the evening through a snow-storm. He told me that he had been sitting quietly beside a hole in the ice all day. Only late in the afternoon had

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he had his first chance to throw a harpoon. The seal, he said, was the largest that he had seen in a long time. "But I missed him," he remarked resignedly.

I expected this aged man, who had endured the severest cold all day, and had missed his only chance of harpooning so big a seal, to feel disgruntled and bitter about his hunting misfortunes. But no. He unhitched his dogs, came over to us, and said smilingly, "I missed my chance but shall try again tomorrow." This equanimity and sportsmanlike behavior made a deep impression on me. Had I been in his shoes, I should have lost all patience, and dumped harpoon, rope and everything else into the hole after the seal. Then I should have returned home, disappointed and bemoaning my fate.

At Eskimo Point I met a man so old that no one could estimate his years. I guessed him to be more than eighty. He accompanied the tribe on its winter travels and took part in all its hunting trips. I have never seen a white man so calm of disposition as this old Eskimo. His equanimity was so widely known that everybody called him "Happy Man." He was content with next to nothing. If the weather was pleasant "Happy Man" would rejoice over it. If it was bad "Happy Man" would mull over his pipe and say consolingly, "The good Lord will soon send us good weather again. We still have a little supply of fish; we still have some frozen meat. And we have tobacco and tea with sugar. We must not complain. The dear Lord means well by us."

This happy old Eskimo of rich experience, whose

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face was plowed with deep furrows and whose whole bearing showed that in the battle for existence he had tasted all the rigors of the Arctic, looked out on the world with an expression of deep peace in his intelligent eyes. As a matter of fact, he possessed nothing of value. His wealth consisted of a few rags, a few harpoons, and a few dogs. His house was not built of stone or of wood, but of snow—a building material which the good Lord had dropped down to him from the clouds. Yet he appeared to me to be a master of the art of living. I know many people who labor day and night seeking constantly to increase the sum of their needs. “Happy Man’s” efforts were all in the opposite direction. He tried constantly to scale down the sum of his personal needs and to be content with the absolute essentials of life.

To the superficial observer the Eskimo presents a rough exterior, but when one succeeds in penetrating this external shell, as the missionaries have learned to do in the course of the years, one discovers a strong and loyal soul endowed with excellent qualities as well as dark streaks. The Eskimo can be as hard as the ice of his frozen seas and as cruel as the north wind. He is crafty and deceitful toward everyone who shows hostility. So long as he remains a disciple of paganism, he is enslaved by greed. But he is also grateful for every kind deed done to him, and he is ready to aid and assist everybody who needs help. When an Eskimo is successful in the hunt he does not retain the trophies for himself alone, but shares them with the tribe. Everyone gets his share. In Igloolik the honored “father

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of the tribe" and "mother of the tribe," called also "king" and "queen," have developed a special system of organization and strict discipline which serves to ensure the necessities of life for the whole tribe. Food and clothing are the main points of their program, and all else bear on these two factors. I believe that the queen is the real ruler.

Each year the hunters are divided into separate groups. Some hunt walruses; others catch fish or harpoon seals; and the last group marches off into the interior to capture reindeer. At a fixed date all of them must return. The reindeer skins furnish the winter's clothing, which is divided equally among all the members of the tribe. The king and queen demand a small tribute and take the softest and finest skins for themselves. The fish which have been caught are divided equally among all, and so are the seals and walruses. Nor are the dogs forgotten. What the camel is to the Bedouin, or the automobile to the American, the dog is to the Eskimo, and he always divides his catch with him. The sick and the old who can no longer join in hunting expeditions need have no fear for the future if they live among Catholic Eskimos. They are not exposed and left to die of hunger any more, as was the usual fate of old age among the pagans. They are kept busy with work at home while occupation of this kind is still possible, and when they no longer are capable of doing even this they are looked after in fraternal charity just the same.

I cannot help but love the Eskimos, since I have seen all this with my own eyes and I know the number-

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less hardships to which they are exposed in the white hell of the Arctic. I particularly like the pure-blooded Eskimos who have no admixture of Indian or of white blood. I like them because of their innate dignity and self-respect and because they show no evidence of deterioration. And I admire them because they are so brave.

The word "Eskimo" comes from the Indians. When they first met, the Indians observed that the Eskimos ate their meat raw, and soon began to tease them about the fact that "Eskimo" meant "Eater of Raw Meat." The Eskimos in turn displayed a spirit of reciprocity, bestowing on their new acquaintances a name indicative of affection, and also strikingly apt. The Indians are on friendly terms with the insects known to the white man as lice. They grant these tiny guests unlimited domicile. The Eskimo, therefore, calls his Indian brethren "Itkrelik," which means "lice eggs." He refers to himself as "Innuït," meaning man. Such prefixes as he uses designate the inhabitants of different territories. The name "Innuït," however, has not come into general use, but the term Eskimo has been firmly established everywhere. No better name could have been found, since the Eskimo literally is an eater of raw meat. As he inhabits an icy desert he must prepare his meals without fire—a hard lot for the dwellers on the desolate shores of the Arctic Sea.

When I first met a group of Indians, I felt that they were quite ready to consider themselves inferior to white men. But with the Eskimos, the situation seemed different. They openly claimed that they could make



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guns, motors, and any kind of machinery if only they had metal in their country. The Arctic regions are not settled in the sense in which our countries are settled. In all Arctic America, from Greenland to Alaska, there are between fifteen thousand and twenty thousand Eskimos. In the Barren Lands, west of Hudson Bay, we reckon about one Eskimo to every four hundred square miles of territory. Formerly the Eskimos were far more numerous. Some explorers have spoken of forty thousand to fifty thousand in Alaska alone, and of thirty thousand to forty thousand in Labrador. It seems impossible to estimate their number with even approximate accuracy. Traces and remnants of ancient large-sized camps seem to indicate a large Eskimo population years ago. Wandering toward better homes in the south they traveled in small groups and were destroyed. They were indeed superior to the Indians in fighting qualities, although inferior to them in numbers.

Before the Eskimos came, another people, the Tunit, occupied their territory. Of these Tunits the Eskimos have retained some vague memories. At first sight, of course, the Eskimo strongly suggests the Mongolian. The similarity of the two races would lead one to conclude that Asia, the cradle of the human race, was also the land from which the Eskimos emigrated. A corroborative argument is easily found in America's proximity to Asia and the fact that only the Bering Sea separates the two continents, with a string of islands—the Aleutians—forming a sort of bridge between them. Until recently no one knew how to interpret the name

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"Aleutian." Now it is generally known that it is an Eskimo word freely translated as "The path by which one comes."

It was the Eskimos, therefore, who named these islands, and in so doing chronicled the fact that this was the route by which they had come. The Eskimos themselves recognize their relationship with the Mongols. When Bishop Turquetil showed a copy of the magazine *Catholic Missions* to a group of Eskimos, and they found in it the picture of a Chinese, they exclaimed with evident delight: "See, here is an Eskimo! But he wears strange clothing. Where is his home?" The Eskimos will not believe that the Chinese are a different people.

They have a finely developed language which enables them to express the most delicate shades of meaning by variations in the forms of their words. It takes years of serious study for any outsider to familiarize himself fully with all the intricacies of their language. When our missionaries first arrived among them in 1912, they had no grammar, no dictionary, no teacher, and they had to distinguish by ear alone the separate words spoken by the Eskimos. Then they had to put them together. Thus they learned the whole language—slowly, with much difficulty, and many disappointments. They began by noting down in small copy-books the individual words they heard. Using them at the first opportunity, they were often laughed at by the Eskimos, either because they had failed to pronounce them correctly, or had misinterpreted the meaning.

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In order to put sentences together they had to learn how to change the words according to the rules of declension, which is effected by the use of infixes and suffixes, taking the place of our prepositions. To the Eskimo mind our prepositions have no complete meaning of their own, and therefore cannot be expressed by separate words but only by declension. The conjugation of verbs follows the same principle, but instead of having several forms of different conjugations—regular, irregular and so forth—the Eskimo language has a set of seven conjugations for each regular verb and these seven conjugations express our conjunctions.

Again, and still with perfect logic, the Eskimo language has no separate words for other parts of speech, such as adjectives, adverbs and verbs. For instance, from the noun *iglu*, meaning house, come such composites as:

In the house	<i>iglumi</i>
My house	<i>igluga</i>
My fine house	<i>iglutsiara</i>
I have a house	<i>igluk'arpunga</i>

So, to make any headway with the Eskimo language, one has to know the secret of the composition of the words, some of which are made up of as many as fifty syllables and would require ten or twelve words for translation into English. Still, the Oblate Fathers succeeded in mastering this language. Both a grammar and a dictionary have been compiled. The dictionary presented many problems. Bishop Turquetil told me of one occasion when he undertook to preach to the

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Eskimos on the passage of Holy Writ: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." Some time before he had heard the Eskimos use the word which meant "perfect." Consequently he employed it not only once but repeatedly. Each time he noticed merriment among the congregation. At the end of his sermon he asked them why they had laughed, and they explained: "Grandfather, do you know what you said? You said: 'Be you round and fat like your heavenly father.'"

"Perfect" as used by them meant only an exterior, not the interior perfection of which Bishop Turquetil intended to speak!

Until a few years ago the art of writing was unknown among the Eskimos. Greenland was the only Eskimo country in which missionaries had introduced the use of the Roman alphabet. When Bishop Turquetil arrived he brought with him the signs of the Indian alphabet and it did not take long to make the Eskimos see their meaning. They also understood their usefulness and soon began to teach them to one another. Bishop Turquetil finds that it takes them only a few hours to learn how to write. Today nearly everyone in the territory of Chesterfield Inlet can read and write. I have carried in my airplane many Eskimo letters marked "air mail" and addressed to places far north of the Arctic Circle. The Indian signs used in writing the Eskimo language were devised by a Protestant missionary about eighty years ago and are now in use among nearly all the Indian tribes of Canada. When an Eskimo returns from a hunt he immediately

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sits down among his friends, but for the first half hour he says not a single word. He seems to need all this time to thaw out inside. Only after he has smoked a few pipes of tobacco will he spit deliberately a couple of times, thereby giving notice that he is ready to take part in the general flow of speech. Then all is convivial and jolly and the talk continues late into the night.

The Eskimos are a well-built breed, although the average tribesman is small compared with us and the women are more diminutive than the men. Their heads are large and round and their faces are flat, with rather prominent cheek bones. Their noses are small and the eyes seem like narrow slits. Their hair is deep black, long, and unkempt, and the women frequently tie theirs above their ears. The people of Igloolik, however, wear their hair hanging to the shoulders like a black helmet. The Eskimos never wash themselves. When I assisted Dr. Melling one day in the examination of a patient, I literally was overcome with nausea, for the legs of the man were covered with a crust of dirt so thick that it could be scraped off with a knife. During his stay in the hospital he was given a bath—probably the first he had ever had in his life. For ten months of each year their country is covered with snow, and has no dust problem, so that their faces look reasonably clean. Pedestrians never have a chance to grumble at passing automobiles for covering them with clouds of dust. In Africa I often went through such storms, and became well acquainted with sand. It was so fine that it penetrated everywhere—even

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under closed eyelids and into tightly shut mouths. My eyes became sore from rubbing, and the taste of sand was always on my teeth, but the only dust storms known in the Arctic are of snow.

Eskimo clothing is not designed to be close fitting. Air must always get through to carry off perspiration. Only some Eskimos are infested with lice, but among the Indians everyone has them. The Eskimos, in my opinion, are relatively clean from a physical standpoint—especially their faces. Their clothes and living quarters, however, are correspondingly filthy. Often enough I have had to make a quick exit from huts where the dwellers' clothes were reeking with the fat of seals, and giving off an abominable odor to which European noses rarely are reconciled. One might almost speak of our missionaries in the Arctic as nasal martyrs, for their noses undergo such torture. Bishop Turquetil told me that one of the greatest trials of his early years was the necessity of living in the same room with groups of Eskimos. In his small chapel the odor often was insufferable. One day he nearly fainted. Though it was the coldest period of the winter, he had to throw open a window to recover from his nausea.

Some of the Eskimos tattoo their faces, arms, and legs, using a sharp instrument with which they cut gashes that later turn into bluish scars. Many of them believe that tattoo-markings will aid them after death to reach the land of bliss more easily, but among the younger Eskimos there are no traces of this practice. Certain tribes have still another way of disfiguring themselves, by boring holes through their cheeks just

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behind the corners of the mouth, and plugging them with small pegs of walrus bone. Thereafter, when they eat, the fat and blubbery raw meat of seals and walrus begins to ooze through. The spectacle is apt to spoil a missionary's appetite, even though he is well hardened to his work. For all that, the Eskimos are not unsightly. Among them—and this is especially true of their young—beauty blooms profusely. I have seen children who were lovely and mature boys who were the very embodiment of manly vigor and courage. Fundamentally, they are a proud and self-conscious people, although their sense of values is different from ours.

While the birth of a child is regarded in Christian countries as an occasion for general rejoicing, among the pagan Eskimos it is viewed quite coolly. The little newcomer to this world is not considered an economic burden on his immediate arrival but neither is he greeted with any sincere family rejoicing. During the period of childbed the mother is forced to live alone in a snowhouse and sometimes in a mere snowhole beside the family dwelling. No one may assist her in her hour of need. If the child is a boy, the period of seclusion lasts one month; if a girl, she is immured for two months. She is allowed nourishment twice a day, but only such food as the sorcerer may prescribe, and nothing at all from the hands of a white person—not even medicine. The mother must do her own cooking and must also see to it that the bone either of a seal or a reindeer is constantly kept in the kettle. Through the whole period of her separation she is forbidden to smoke—a heavy penance for an Eskimo. When the

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time comes for her readmission to the family circle, she receives new clothing. Usually it is high time for this, as mother and child are covered with dirt. All the clothing which she previously wore or owned is burned.

Immediately after the birth of the child, a song is sung about somebody who is dead, in the firm belief that a departed soul has come back to the world in the body of this little child. After eight days the child receives its name, which is always that of the departed person who is believed to have returned in this guise. The child, therefore, is expected to assume also the relationships which belonged to the earlier incarnation. For example, if a child has received her grandmother's name, her own mother will call her "mama" and the older children will know her as "grandma." If this child happens to be a boy, he inherits the right to wear women's clothes, for his grandmother lives within him.

One result of this strange belief is that the children are badly spoiled, for how could a mother chastise her own "mama" who has come back to her in the guise of her little baby? Among the Eskimos no one must pronounce the name of a departed person who has not been dead one full year. Thus it sometimes happens that a child who has inherited the name of someone recently dead may not hear it spoken for many months. Those who have accidentally received the same name are considered close relatives. To the Eskimo his name means as much as if it were the very source of his life. When a child is ill a great deal, its



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name may be considered the cause of its misfortune, and it may receive another one instead.

As soon as the newborn child has his name, he is also promised in marriage. Part of the price is paid at once and the remainder when the wedding takes place. Married couples who have no children of their own can buy children from other families. In this event the real mother may not give suck to her child for more than three weeks. Thereafter, the foster mother takes care of the feeding and gives the child water out of her own mouth. She also chews meat and feeds it to the baby. Meanwhile the real mother may sit quietly by and watch the proceedings.

It seemed like a joke and I laughed heartily one day in the Arctic when a seven-year-old boy handed me a letter which he had addressed to his wife who lived three hundred miles farther south. I showed the letter to the resident missionary and asked if the boy had all his wits. He explained that it was a long-established custom among the pagan Eskimos to betroth their children at birth, or even earlier. Expectant parents often made a pact that if one had a girl and the other a boy, these two would become husband and wife. But sometimes the agreement was less thoughtfully expressed, and complications arose when the babies happened to be a pair of girls or a pair of boys. Since all newborn children are immediately promised in marriage by their parents, Catholic Eskimos have kept this old custom and the Church tolerates it. Even when they live several hundred miles apart, these affianced children send one another greetings and gifts on every

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special occasion. I have often acted as Cupid's messenger, carrying letters and parcels between brides and grooms who were anywhere from seven to ten years of age.

This early promise of marriage helps the Catholic Eskimos to adjust themselves mentally to their partners from earliest youth. On reaching maturity they marry with the feeling that they should do so to be consistent and normal. Divorce, of course, does not exist among the Catholic Eskimos. They love their children devotedly, girls as well as boys, and their family life is affectionate. All these regulations are handed down from generation to generation. At night, some old grandmother can be heard in every snow-house talking about these ancient traditions which must be honored and obeyed. She seems to keep on chattering about them until the last one of her listeners has fallen asleep. The children are reminded again and again of all these rules until they become part of their very being.

There is a man in every tribe whose business it is to know all the reliable and effective magical incantations and to prescribe rules of behavior in all critical situations. He is the sorcerer, or medicine man, and his advice is asked in every serious case of illness. It is a real mystery to the Eskimo how a person becomes ill in the prime of life. He understands that old men must die of decrepitude and young men from acts of violence. But when a healthy person gets sick it seems to him that an evil spirit must be involved. The sorcerer is then called in to drive out the spirit. He goes through

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his ritual of wild leaps and dances, muttering his magical phrases and incantations. If all this is of no avail he concludes that some member of the tribe has committed a wrong by which the spirit has been enabled to harm the patient.

After the patient has become delirious no one will touch him. The bystanders listen with awe and with close attention to his feverish fancies, for the words of the sick and dying are sacred, and his spirit, moreover, might seek revenge on the living if his last words were ignored. The pagan Eskimos firmly believe that neglect in carrying out the injunctions of their spiritual brings disaster to the individuals involved, or even to the whole tribe. Many a white traveler has been murdered by them only because he did not know and did not obey the prescriptions of their spirits. Fearing disaster for themselves and wishing to propitiate the spirits they simply killed the transgressor. Occasionally it happens that they also regard certain actions of their white visitors as sorcery.

When Bishop Turquetil, in his early years among the Eskimos, administered baptism to children in danger of death, he always took care to avoid movements or ceremonies that might be interpreted as magical. As if he wished merely to lessen the child's fever, he pressed a wet cloth on its forehead, squeezed out a few drops of water, and thus conferred the sacrament.

Until the missionaries began to work among them, the Eskimos believed only in evil spirits. Bishop Turquetil tells of a man who had looked after the necessities of life for one of the missionaries until he fell ill.

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From the start of his illness, the missionary noticed some inexplicable accompaniments. While he was with him, the patient was quiet and free from suffering, but when he left him alone, the Eskimo raved like a maniac.

Several Eskimos who had recently come to the station offered to cure the patient by means of magic. The priest tried with all his might to dissuade them, but in spite of his opposition, the chief sorcerer of the region arrived before long to offer help. The patient, however, relying upon the advice of the missionary, would have none of it. Though this refusal did not fail to impress him, showing as it did the great influence the priest had on the patient, the medicine man returned the same evening. Soon after nightfall he commenced his incantations. With inhuman, bloodcurdling cries and howls, he carried out a most ludicrous ceremony. Thereupon he lapsed into a heavy sleep—the so-called magic sleep—during which he was to learn the cause of the illness and its remedy. The conjured spirit, however, declared himself in a bad humor because the priest was standing in his way.

Next evening the sorcerer wandered about among the neighboring hills, after sending word to the priest to remain indoors because the spirit apparently stood in terror of him. Soon the incantations began again with the same crying and howling as on the previous night. Then word was sent to the missionary that the sick man would be cured, for it had been learned from the spirit that he had been bewitched by a sorcerer from farther north and that the spell would cease with that sorcerer's death. Sure enough, the body of the supposed

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culprit was found soon afterward. He had been stabbed. Rivalry between the various sorcerers is very intense and active. The patient's condition, however, grew worse. Some circumstances of his illness were so strange that Father Turquetil began to believe in the possibility of a real case of possession.

The Eskimos have a rich store of legends, which they faithfully preserve and hand down from generation to generation through the whole of the Arctic region. With these legends they foster their strong feeling of racial unity. The fine talents and the strength of will with which they are endowed give them considerable self-confidence. They know that they are better able than any white people to deal with the hunting, housing, clothing and orientation problems of life in the land of ice. They do not bend their knees in adoration when brought face to face with some great technical invention of the white man, but stand erect, proud, and self-respecting. Bishop Turquetil tells of their calm acceptance of the first airplane to reach Chesterfield Inlet. It began to circle and to come lower, seeming to grow larger in its descent—this bird with the deep buzzing voice. The Eskimos watched it in utter amazement. When the plane landed and two men stepped out they ran toward it, drawn partly by awe and partly by curiosity. But in spite of their inner excitement they carefully abstained from showing signs of astonishment. With an assumed air of indifference they asked the flyers: "Where do you come from?" The answer was: "From Churchill."

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Churchill lies about four hundred miles south of Chesterfield Inlet.

"How long have you traveled?"

"A little more than three hours."

The Eskimos then looked at one another and said in a matter-of-fact way: "That is fast." But not another word would they utter to express their surprise.

Bishop Turquetil gave them the first radio they had ever seen, to lessen the loneliness of their long winter night. When the receiving set first carried the strains of distant music to the listening Eskimos, they were startled. Then they suspected the good Bishop of playing a joke on them. He had done that before, and not on them alone. A few years previously he had given them a gramophone.

Thinking that he was up to some trick again, and determined not to be fooled, they were sure that he had hidden the gramophone somewhere and was playing a record on it. He had to turn the radio on and off repeatedly to convince them that the sounds really were coming from the receiver. Even then they were not at a loss for an answer.

"You whites," they said, "are clever people. You can send your voices across the sea, and you can fly through the air. But when you come into our country you cannot live without us. If we don't hunt reindeer for you and capture seals and walruses you would have to starve. Your own food would be insufficient or you would get sick of it."

To illustrate their remarkable inventiveness, the Bishop told me the story of an Eskimo who killed two

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reindeer at a spot a day's journey from the snow hut in which his hungry family was waiting and how he got them home with improvised equipment. All their food supplies had been exhausted. Quick aid was necessary. The successful hunter had no sled with him to bring home the heavy animals he had bagged. What should he do? Reflecting a moment he hit upon a solution. Cutting a hole through the ice of a near-by lake, he dipped a reindeer skin into the water until it was saturated. Then he spread it out like a bellying sail, and held it up to the ice-cold breeze. In a few minutes it was frozen as stiff as a board. Laying it on the snow he let it freeze still harder. At last with this frozen skin as a makeshift sled, he dragged home his game and saved his family.

As he was entering Hudson Straits on his first journey to the mission in Chesterfield, Bishop Turquetil was shown a four-cornered Eskimo boat. The framework was made of the bones of seals, walruses, and reindeer. The covering was of sealskins. Another seal-skin served as a sail. The boat belonged to an Eskimo family that had just arrived. Ten years earlier this family had lived in a reindeer tent on the ice far out from shore. There they had hunted seals—with one rifle and one harpoon, their entire hunting equipment. When the ice began to move in the summer it broke so rapidly and violently that the family could not escape to the mainland for safety. The ice floe on which they were stranded was carried out to sea.

The marooned family finally landed on an uninhabited island fifty miles from the nearest shore. They had

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no boat and no sled. When winter came, they were unable still to return to their former home, as the sea was frozen for a distance of only seventeen miles. Before long their ammunition was exhausted and the rifle became useless. They had no needles, no matches, no tools of any kind. For all that, they did not despair. They began to use chips of flint and bone as implements. Thus they lived for ten years. Then they built with bones and skins the four-cornered boat shown to Bishop Turquetil. With favoring winds behind them they sailed back to the country that was home to them. Long before, they had been given up as dead.

It is their great shrewdness, will power and iron determination that make it possible for the Eskimos to live both well and happily in their land of ice and snow. They are marvelously skillful in adapting themselves to their cruel environment and in utilizing every object that can be made to serve in any way.



# 9

## IDYL IN THE IGLOO

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IN OUR mission territory in the Arctic the Eskimos live for nine months out of every twelve in snow-houses, better known as igloos. As soon as the cold weather comes, they fold up their summer tents of reindeer or sealskin. With their long knives they cut the frozen snow into large slabs. These building blocks are laid on the ground, close together, in the form of circles. Successive layers are piled up, each one closer to the center, like the stones in a round dome. Considerable skill is required to construct an igloo of exactly spherical form. The secret of the subtle construction lies in the way they cut the blocks. These are generally six or eight inches thick and from two and a half to three feet long. They are cut wedge-shape, like the stones of an arch, thinner and narrower on

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the side which faces the center. Laid in successive rows they naturally form a circle and also lean inward. Soon only a small round hole remains at the top of the dome. That is the time to insert the keystone snow-block. Up to this point the builder has worked from the inside. Now his helper on the outside lifts up the snow-block which is to cover the hole. He whittles it down till it resembles a cork-shaped keystone, which slips into the round opening and fills it snugly. The separate blocks of snow soon knit together so firmly that men, dogs or even the big sled weighing more than one hundred and fifty pounds can be sustained by this marvelous piece of construction. But until the keystone is in place, even the weight of a child leaning against the walls will cause the igloo to collapse. When I built my first snowhouse it promptly fell in on me. The men always do the building. When the walls have been finished, an opening is made at the bottom, just large enough to let a man or a woman crawl through. It is roofed over with snow and looks like a small tunnel.

The interior arrangements of the snowhouse are left to the women. All around the circular room a bench is built out of snow and is covered with whatever furs are available. With five or six persons living together in such a room, it soon becomes warm enough to permit the removal of some clothing. A small lamp, filled with seal oil and giving off a peculiar rancid odor, is kept constantly lighted. The men smoke their pipes, and frequently the women, too. The air becomes so thick and heavy that one's eyes burn. The igloo smells are almost unbearable for a European getting his first taste

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of the Arctic. When I made my first visit to the house of an Eskimo family I was almost knocked down by the odor, and I said to the Father who was with me: "I can't stand it here. Let us go visiting somewhere else." We went off to see another family. But there it was even worse, so we retraced our steps, and I did my best to become acclimated.

Stoves cannot be used in an igloo, for there is neither wood nor coal in the Arctic and if there were, the snowhouse would melt from artificial heat. There is little fresh air, of course, and the vitiated air is breathed in and out, over and over again. When it becomes too warm somebody cuts a hole through the wall with his knife to let pure outside air come in. When it begins to get cold, the hole can easily be closed with snow. Often it is so warm indoors that the walls begin to melt and trickle. At once, fresh air is permitted to enter, freezing the tiny drops of water. Thus, in course of time, the snowhouse becomes an icehouse. After that has happened it is no longer warm. The Eskimos consequently move out and build themselves a new villa near by. Snowhouses therefore are somewhat evanescent and usually are habitable for little more than two or three months.

When the Eskimos intend to remain at some particular place for a long time, they build their snowhuts with great care. Then they are not satisfied to close the entrance by means of a snow board, but build a long vestibule which often takes the shape of the letter S, or runs in zigzag fashion. From this corridor one enters into the real hut through a narrow hole at the

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floor line. Occasionally these snowhuts have a diameter of sixteen feet. The poles which stand upright in the snow outside are runners from the dog sleds, or harpoons which are too long to be taken inside. They are simply left outdoors and stuck in the snow, even though they are the family's most valuable possessions. The Eskimo has no fear of their being stolen.

It is only natural that most of the family life of the Eskimos should unfold itself within the walls of the snowhut. Here they spend the greater part of the long winter, even though they have no stove with which to warm themselves and no furniture to make them comfortable. Three-fourths of the interior is taken up by the bench of snow which runs all around the wall of the hut. It is about two and a half feet high and is heavily overlaid with furs. On it the Eskimos sit and sleep. Their heating system is almost wholly natural, like that of a bear in his den. Each individual is his own steam boiler, and acts also as a radiator, throwing off a little heat with every breath. The more people in the hut, the higher the temperature rises. Very little heat escapes. There are no drafts, as in our civilized dwellings, for Eskimo snowhouses as a rule have no windows or other openings in the walls. The one low door at the floor level, generally closed with furs, is the only exit for man, beast or heat. Occasionally a hole is cut through the wall to regulate the inside temperature by day, but it is closed at night. Thermometer readings are usually a little below the freezing point at the floor level, and a few degrees higher on the bench.

## IDYL IN THE IGLOO

A considerable amount of artificial heat, however, is provided by the Eskimo lighting unit. Standing in a niche, or hanging in the middle of the hut, is a stone lamp hollowed out in the form of a crescent, which constitutes the lighting system of the igloo. The hollow is filled with whale oil and the carefully prepared wick is made of moss. The housewife chews the blubber of the seal, walrus and bear, or the fat of the deer, to extract the oil. Then she spits it on the wick, lights up and puts some more blubber in the hollow at the back of the flame, or suspends some deer's fat over the flame from a bone stuck in the ceiling. Both blubber and fat melt and drip into the bowl. When the flame is high, more oil flows toward the wick and too much of it puts the fire out. If the flame is too low, the wick burns dry and smokes terribly. In this way the flame and the fat play seesaw. It is the work of the lady to attend to the lamp with a bone stick, with which she regulates the fire and its source.

The soapstone lamp is also used for cooking—always a slow process, since it takes three or four hours to boil the thawed snow for tea, and five or six hours to cook meat. No wonder frozen raw meat is the preferred diet! The kettle is a tin can or an aluminum pot obtained at the trading post in exchange for furs, or else it is fashioned out of soapstone by the Eskimo. This tea is almost the only boiled or cooked nourishment of the Arctic.

Though the air inside the snowhouse is often intolerable to white people, yet all the missionaries say: "The snowhut seems like a paradise after the hardships of the

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journey." The Eskimos feel quite comfortable. The rank smell does not bother them. Soldiers of the World War sometimes felt that way: "Better some thick warm air than the cold cutting ozone," was a fairly common remark. Out of doors the temperature may be fifty and more degrees below zero. The hard frozen snow will crackle underfoot like shreds of glass which are being ground together. Inside, on the bench, the thermometer will be around zero. In the "warm air" the Eskimos lay aside their day clothes and crawl between fur covers. There they sleep so soundly and peacefully that even a rifleshot does not waken them.

Above the soapstone lamp a small net is suspended from two sticks, horns or bones stuck in the snow walls, and here the mitts, shoes, boots of the hunter or clothing of the children are hung to dry through the night.

In the winter season the snowhut is an acceptable enough abode, but when the heavy thaws set in during May or June, it becomes most uncomfortable. Rain and melting snow seep through the vaulted roof. Sections of it give way and finally the whole roof caves in. Wind, snow and rain enter freely and the dampness causes considerable suffering, especially among the women and children. When it is still too early and too cold to move into a tent, the Eskimos replace the collapsed roof with tightly stretched animal skins. Disintegration continues. The walls drip. Soon they look like muddy yellow paste with holes here and there. The Eskimos stuff old pieces of fur into them and keep on sleeping in their dissolving homes. Despite these inconveniences

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they do not appear dismayed or worried, for they are able to endure much greater hardships. When the short summer at last arrives, they set up their tents with poles of driftwood which were gathered on the shore of the bay by their forefathers. The covering is of reindeer or sealskin. Special care is required for the erection of a tent because of the wind storms. Of late some Eskimos have begun to use tents of white canvas which they get through the sale of furs. All tents are put up on pebbly ground, as protection against dampness. It is about this time of year that they set forth on their long summer hunting trips.

One August day in 1937 I looked around the harbor of Chesterfield, and saw a large whaling boat being prepared for a trip. I found that it belonged to an Eskimo named Sicksack, and his whole family were busily engaged running back and forth loading their household belongings into the boat. It was twenty feet long, and three generations of the family—grandparents, parents and children—planned to take passage on it.

The tent of reindeer skin in which they had been living was taken down and put aboard. It was summertime, and Hudson Bay was free of ice. I was astonished, therefore, to see them lift aboard a sled which was almost as long as the boat itself. Finally, they brought along nine dogs and stowed them away. All the earthly belongings of the Eskimo family were now piled in that small vessel and the Sicksacks were ready to weigh anchor, and to sail for their hunting grounds. The men were to hunt walruses, seals, reindeer, ice-bears and foxes, and to devote days and nights, between hunts,

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to catching fish. The women were to attend to the housework within the tent and the igloo. A traveling Eskimo always takes all his possessions with him, as well as his entire family. The Sicksacks planned to return to Chesterfield Inlet for Christmas. By that time, however, the seas would be frozen over and the whole landscape would have changed. It would then be necessary to get the sled into commission. The boat would be fastened tightly on top of it, and inside the boat would be found the family, their belongings, and all the spoils of their four months of hunting. I know that they would bring their trophies home either in the form of foodstuffs, or as goods to be used in trade and exchange, such as the pelts of the beautiful foxes caught in their traps. On the return trip the sail would again be hoisted for, in the event of a favorable wind, it would lighten the task of the nine dogs harnessed and hitched in front of the sled. Then a joyous Christmas would be celebrated. Two weeks later the Sicksack family would depart once more for their hunting grounds to the north.

I wished the Sicksacks a happy journey, shook hands with all of them, from the oldest to the youngest, and waved good-by. As the boat moved away a small boy leaned far over its side and shouted: "Don't forget to say 'au revoir' for me to the Bishop."



# 10

## ESKIMO DRESS

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WHENEVER I fly from New York into the Arctic region I leave my good clothes at the mission house of Fort Albany in James Bay, where our supply base is located. I entrust my coat, vest, well-pressed trousers, linen, collars, and all the rest of it to the care of the Sisters, for I cannot wear these things while traveling for any length of time in the Arctic. Light shoes are exchanged for fur boots and moccasins. My heaviest woolen wear is unpacked and my oldest suit of clothes is restored to full honors. Over this suit I wear a fur-lined flyer's outfit and over that a leather overcoat. My head is covered with a cap of otter-fur and my hands are protected by a pair of woolen gloves, over which another pair of large fur-lined caribou gloves are drawn. Flying goggles of various colors

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are made ready. With a long shawl wrapped around my neck, I am ready for a flight in the Arctic. I do not feel the cold in my plane, which is warmed up somewhat by its engine.

But the Eskimo must dress for long marches, and for sitting hours at a stretch on the ice while hunting for seal, without running the risk of a cold. His land yields absolutely no crops, and produces neither flax nor wool. Up to 1911 the region was almost unknown to white men, and not one trading post had been established. For these reasons it might seem impossible to obtain clothing that would give adequate protection from the sub-zero Arctic climate, but the Eskimo, with his practical sense, has discovered the ideal type of clothing for this region. His solution of what to wear shows that he can teach the white man a few things. He makes his clothes out of the skins of reindeer and seals. If he cannot get these particular skins, he contents himself with the pelts of smaller animals, such as snow-hares, or with the plumage of various Arctic birds. I have examined the wardrobes of a good many Eskimos to find out what different items are included. No articles of underwear, either of linen or any other material, are known to them. They wear the soft fur of the reindeer next to their skin. In Arctic conditions, undergarments of fur are far better and healthier than those of cloth. In such robes the Eskimo can sit for hours at a time on the bare ice, even when the temperature is fifty degrees below zero. Were a man to wear garments made out of cloth, his perspiration would immediately freeze into an armor plate of ice.

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This does not happen to Eskimo clothing. The perspiration is absorbed and clings to the fur. It is true enough that as soon as the Eskimo takes off his clothes at night and lays them aside, each hair becomes an ice needle and the garment is as capable of stinging as a pin cushion or a porcupine's hide, but he has his own way of avoiding that discomfort. In all his wanderings he solicitously carries about with him a piece of driftwood. With it he beats the frost out of his clothes bright and early every morning, pounding away until every hair is soft and flexible. Even then, no small amount of self-discipline is needed to slip out of warm sleeping bags into ice-cold clothes.

In cut the fur suits of the Eskimos resemble our own garments to some degree. The men wear trousers, coats with cowls or hoods, mittens and various kinds of foot gear—sealskin water boots and fur moccasins. The coat has a tail, after the fashion of a waiter's frock coat. The cowl is sewn to the coat and is inseparable from it. It may even be of one piece with the coat and can be worn folded back, or drawn forward so as to cover the head completely, leaving only the face exposed. During the winter the edge of the cowl usually resembles a wreath of ice. Its tiny points can cut the cheeks most painfully. Nevertheless, the cowl is most useful, and quite necessary to protect the head, ears and face from wind and cold.

The Eskimo women expertly improve the appearance of these clothes by sewing into them strips of the white fur from Arctic hares. Coats and trousers are sewn in such a way as to fit loosely about the

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body and below the knees to permit the evaporation of sweat and a free circulation of air. When the cold is very severe the Eskimo takes up the slack in his robes with a strip of seal or reindeer skin.

Feminine attire is not much different from that of the men. Trousers are worn and the coats are slightly elongated in front. The shoulder openings usually are quite wide. This arrangement permits the women, during their long trips in the cold, to draw their arms out of their sleeves and keep them warm against their bodies. The Eskimos obtain glass pearls from the fur traders and with these they embroider their clothes quite artistically.

There is one special article of female apparel which is unique and peculiar to the Eskimos—the *amaute*, or baby cowl, worn on the back. Small girls are not allowed to wear it, but as soon as they become mature and marriageable they receive it in a solemn ceremony. The event is announced to all the Eskimos of the neighborhood and thus official notice is served on the bridegroom, to whom the girl was promised in her infancy, that he may now come and claim his bride. The *amaute* is a cradle for the baby and every Eskimo child must spend the first few years of its life therein. It consists of a special fold in the coat, arranged in such a way that the baby lies right against its mother's back. This arrangement gives the child the full benefit of its mother's body heat but it has disadvantages for her. The bestowal of an *amaute* on a young girl is the sign by which her full maturity is publicly acknowledged. If the man to whom she was originally promised, and

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who has already paid part of the purchase price, happens to be living at a great distance, many years may elapse before he gets the news that his fiancée has come of age, or before he finds the group of hunters with whom she travels. Meanwhile, if the girl is a pagan, she is considered fair and lawful game for every pagan Eskimo man.

With the approach of summer the two sets of fur become uncomfortable. Even the outer garments can be too warm. If, by that time, wear and tear have not rubbed the hair off his clothes, the Eskimo helps the process along by scraping it off with his knife. The clothing industry is one of the women's tasks. During my early days in the Arctic I often wondered why the women and the girls, and they alone, were constantly engaged in chewing leather. The women chewed large skins and the girls smaller ones. For these poor people, to whom nature has granted no other instrument, their teeth are their most important tools. With them they work over the skins of various animals to make them soft and fit for use in the manufacture of water boots, and of reins and guard-lines for the dogs. Women and girls chew those skins for weeks at a time, trying to remove from them the last tiny remnants of meat and to make the leather durable and pliant. Good teeth, therefore, are a most important asset in the Eskimo's equipment—not merely because they are needed for the chewing of raw meat, the only available food, but also in the preparation of their garments, their ropes of thong, and their kayaks or canoes. The constant chewing of the tough skins tends

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to make the jaws of Eskimo women' excessively strong and large and to broaden their faces, until to the white men they seem disfigured, but the Eskimo considers this an evidence of great diligence and industry. They are, therefore, a sign of womanly virtue and for this very reason women with broad lower jaws are highly esteemed among the Eskimos. Since the introduction of sugar among them by the fur traders, their teeth have deteriorated. They drink sweet tea day and night and this practice has hurt their teeth. Among them, as among ourselves, those who are most fond of sweets are apt to have the poorest teeth.

Other tools needed by the Eskimos are supplied by the animal world. Fishbones are made into needles, and the sinews of reindeer and seals into strong, durable thread. With these simple devices the Eskimo women know how to make clothing that wears well. The pagan Eskimos feel themselves bound by many important regulations when it comes to making their clothing. No one is allowed, for example, to make a pair of breeches out of the winter pelt of a newly killed reindeer. Christian Leden, the explorer, who lived for three years among the tribes of our mission territory on the shores of Hudson Bay, had only one suit of clothes, made of sealskin at the beginning of his first Arctic winter. It was insufficient to protect him from the cold. The group of Eskimos with whom he traveled had lost their whole supply of summer reindeer skins in the upset of a boat. Leden wanted to have a warm pair of trousers made out of the skin of a newly killed reindeer, but no Eskimo woman would undertake the task

## ESKIMO DRESS

for him. There was nothing to do but freeze until he could find a group of hunters who still had a supply of summer skins on hand.

During the summer, traveling missionaries in the Arctic wear the same type of garb as the Eskimos. When they happen to be at their mission stations, they wear European clothes. But as soon as the dogs are hitched to the sleds, and they are off on the snow-trails for hundreds of miles to visit camps, then they are clothed exactly like the Eskimos. Experience has taught them that only in this way can they endure the ravaging cold.

# 11

## ARCTIC MENU

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**O**FTEN enough I have had to turn away on seeing what the Eskimos were eating, and their table manners. Walrus meat, heads of fish, and the intestines of seals all were heaped together in a corner of the hut. I always tried to persuade myself that this pile of meat, looking like refuse, was for the dogs, but in vain. The Eskimos helped themselves from it. Children picked out raw fish-heads and chewed them; the women nibbled bits of a seal's intestines, and the men cut off hunks of meat. Gripping the end of a big slice with his teeth, a man would cut off as big a mouthful as he could handle, shear the rest away with a huge butcher knife held close to his lips, and then hand the meat and knife to his neighbor, while he gulped down his own big mouthful and grinned with pleasure. When it was



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gone he wiped the blood and grease from his lips with his fingers, sucked them, and dried them in his hair, finally wiping his lips with his coat sleeve. Even the smallest children are fed from this same pile. Since their jaws and teeth are not strong enough to grind such tough food, however, and also because it is too cold for them, it is first chewed and warmed by their mothers, who then stuff it into their gaping mouths.

It might almost seem that Our Dear Lord did not have the Eskimos in mind when he taught the Apostles how to pray. The whole of the "Our Father" is valid for them, except for one petition, which they find it hard to understand. The missionaries also find it difficult to explain to them the phrase: "Give us this day our daily bread," for the Eskimo eats no bread. He does not like it. He says that it has neither taste nor smell. For him, daily bread means daily food, and this is the way in which the missionaries have translated the Lord's Prayer. Daily food, of course, means fish, seal, walrus, polar bear or deer.

Bishop Turquetil tells of an incident that occurred in the winter of 1917-1918 when a few catechumens were attending early Mass. The prayer had been said, and a pagan who had come to watch out of sheer curiosity had heard the petition, "Give us this day our daily food." Toward the end of the Mass, a polar bear happened to be walking near the mission. The dogs scented him, went for him and forced him to take refuge in the porch of the mission. Howling around him they made a deafening noise. One of the missionaries went out to see what it was, saw the bear and

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gave the news to the officiating Father, who turned toward the congregation and said: "Take my gun and shoot him."

It was done quickly, and the pagan, who enjoyed a first-class breakfast that morning, said in all sincerity: "Black Robe, if you pray like that every morning, I will come to Mass every day." He had understood. Actually, the only type of bread which the Eskimo of the inner Arctic ever comes to know and taste is the Lord's Bread in the Holy Eucharist.

On my first visit to Repulse Bay I was amazed to find that the bill of fare had been changed for once—there was no fish. Arriving in the late afternoon I was invited to a snow-hare supper. This was a real treat, so that I did not miss bread, butter, potatoes, or other vegetables. I was eating snow-hare for the first time in my life, and it tasted extremely good. With it we had some coffee. Next morning we had snow-hare for breakfast, but no bread and butter. At noontime there was snow-hare again with coffee and cookies. In the evening once more snow-hare, with coffee and cookies. Thus we went along for three days until I began to meet snow-hares in my dreams. I was so weary of them that I vowed never to eat snow-hare again.

In point of fact, however, the good Fathers—Marc Lacroix and Joseph Massé—had nothing else to offer. While away on a hunt, the Eskimos and missionaries had caught a few of them, and in consequence, snow-hares had appeared on the menu for three days. On the fourth day the mission ship arrived with her cargo of a year's provisions, including some boxes of eggs.

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In the stress of unloading the supplies there was no time to bake bread, so we had none. But we did get a change of diet. A great many of the eggs had been broken, and had to be eaten without delay, so we had eggs for breakfast, eggs without bread for luncheon, and eggs with cookies for supper. For three days it was eggs, eggs, eggs.

The priests living in the North, of course, must become inured to the limitations of their diet. It took me some time to become accustomed to such monotony. The first two weeks in the Arctic were the hardest of all for me. Battling with the weather exhilarates me, but the complete change to such a limited diet depresses me. Usually after Mass elsewhere, I look forward to a good breakfast of ham and eggs, but in the Arctic I am offered fish. When I come to the table at noon I get more fish, and when I turn up for supper I find that the fish left over from luncheon is being served again. That is the chief and, nearly always, the only item on the menu. Fresh vegetables, of course, are quite unobtainable, since the ground is covered with snow for nine months, and stays frozen for twelve.

The stations which are reached by the mission steamer suffer least from lack of provisions. Their supplies are landed almost at their front doors, after a trip of two thousand miles. When the egg days, traditionally coincidental with the ship's unloading, have passed, bread baking begins. Then, too, all the newly arrived bags and boxes are opened and their contents sampled. However, since it is advisable to eat the same food as the Eskimos while in their country, the mis-

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sionaries strive to eat seal and walrus meat, cooked, raw and frozen. Their flesh and the raw meat of fish contain the vitamins which are lacking in canned foods.

Once when I happened to tell Dr. Andrew B. Rivers, famous physician at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, that the Eskimos would eat even spoiled fish, he clapped his hands triumphantly and said: "Now I know where the Eskimos get their vitamin K."

Some of the missionaries cannot stomach the oily meat of seal and walrus. They must get the necessary vitamins somewhere else. I have heard them say that they could no longer eat even the best preserved foods, because their systems needed either fresh meat or fresh vegetables. It would be a blessing if these men could have fresh food even once a month and I know of no other way to carry such provisions to them except by the mission airplane.

Eskimos, it is true, have never heard about vitamins. Nevertheless, as if by instinct, they get what is needed from nature. They go after vitamins and they find them in their own kind of vegetable garden. Reindeer, walrus, and other game animals live on various forms of plant life which they laboriously dig out of the snow or pull up from the sea. Father Eskimo goes hunting, kills them and opens their stomachs. There, as in a market basket, he finds a whole collection of fresh vegetables, rich in vitamin-content. And this partly explains why many Arctic expeditions have ended in failure because of insufficient knowledge of how to solve the problems of food, clothing and suitable liv-

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ing quarters in the icy North. Formerly it was thought that large quantities of dried, canned or salted food-stuffs could sustain the lives of travelers. When game animals were killed most of the meat was salted down before it was put into the storehouse. Some was cut into small pieces and boiled until it almost fell apart to keep it from spoiling. The result of living on this type of diet was sickness, scurvy and death. The proper procedure for the maintenance of health in the Arctic must be learned from the Eskimos themselves. One who is taught by them will remain healthy, light-hearted, ready for work and active.

The first white man to grasp this fact and to change over from the customs of the civilized world to those of the Eskimos seems to have been Dr. Rae, who lived in Eskimo fashion. He had been reared as an English gentleman, and his friends at home greatly disapproved of his adoption of Eskimo living habits. Rae ignored their protests, and every missionary, every Hudson Bay Company official, and every Arctic explorer who follows his example, remains healthy and full of well-being in the Arctic. The recipe is simply to dress like an Eskimo, house oneself like an Eskimo, and eat what Eskimos eat.

The Eskimo does not salt down the meat that he wishes to keep for a possible day of want. The temperature of the Arctic permits him to pile it on the frozen ground. Then he has only to cover it with heavy stones for protection against marauding animals. He makes many of these storehouses if his success in hunting warrants it. There is no need for iceboxes. The

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sub-zero temperature saves him the trouble and expense of refrigeration. The stored meat freezes quickly. When finally consumed, it is eaten raw and unthawed. After a meal of frozen meat one feels cold through and through, but in about an hour a pleasant feeling of warmth spreads over the body and remains until the next meal. If this genial heat fails it is stepped up by a draught of fish or seal oil. Newly caught fish are eaten raw; stored fish are eaten raw and frozen.

It is interesting to note that Eskimos who have lost their racial identity through intermarriage with the Indians, and who live in wooden houses and neglect the dietary discipline of the Arctic, have become less resistant to climatic hardships and show clear signs of a loss of stamina, as well as racial degeneration. Fresh meat is the first requisite. It must not be salted or boiled since, under Arctic cooking principles, it would simply be boiled to death. Such meat can satisfy a man's hunger and nourish him although it cannot protect him against scurvy. But the main dietary factor always is fish, which the Eskimo catches in the open sea and in the landlocked lakes, with hook and line, with a harpoon or, if he has become a little more prosperous, with a net.

To go fishing over week ends for pleasure is fine sport but to fish with the definite aim of keeping body and soul together is more arduous. And when the fishing goes on for weeks and months it is apt to prove both tedious and hard. On one of his journeys Bishop Turquetil traveled for seven days through snow and gale without a single thing to eat, and the first bite of

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food offered him was fish, which he ate alive. Father Frapsauce lost his life while fishing. Sitting on the ice in bitterly cold weather he slipped into the freezing water and drowned. Only his snow shoes were found later, along with the few fish that he had caught and laid beside him near the edge of a deep black hole.

But the constant quest for small fish is only one aspect of the battle for food in the Arctic. The Eskimo devotes much of his time to bigger game—to the seals, walruses and polar bears that share his sovereignty in the Arctic. When two Eskimos of Pelly Bay caught eight seals in a single night, the whole camp took on a holiday mood. This was a gala event. As soon as they killed the animals, the hunters took out the livers and ate them, for one of their proverbs runs: "Seals' liver tastes best while still warm with the body's heat."

On seal hunting expeditions the Eskimos use their kayaks. The framework of a kayak or canoe is of drift-wood or, when this is lacking, of the bones of reindeer and seals. The responsible task of covering the framework with sealskins is left to the Eskimo women. The skins have to be sewn all around the frame, but on top a round hole is left open—large enough for a man to slip within. In this frail and easily capsized boat, using only a single two-bladed paddle, the Eskimo ventures out into the open sea for trips of several days' duration. He seems to have become a part of his boat and he knows instinctively how to glide through narrow openings between ice floes, how to land on a cake of ice, how to draw his boat up behind him and shove off again into the water. All this is done quickly and

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safely, with no loss of time, for an Eskimo feels quite safe in his kayak. And there are practically no drowning accidents except those which result from running additional risks while bear or walrus hunting.

Seals are often found in groups like walruses, but they are also seen swimming alone. Every few minutes they raise their heads out of the water and look around for whatever may arouse suspicion. If any danger threatens they disappear in the water. When the Eskimos go on a seal hunt, they throw sealskins over themselves for protective covering and, crawling stealthily on their stomachs, they try to get close to their prospective victim. When the seal raises his head, either they lie still or else they imitate his movements. Thus they keep on until they are quite close to him. Then they throw the harpoon. Eskimos equipped with rifles on such a hunt naturally are apt to have better luck.

In winter, when all coasts are frozen over, seals look for ice-free holes to come up for air. Like walruses, they are mammals and cannot breathe under water. They know how to keep these places open for use as breathing holes but when the Eskimo finds one of these openings, no matter how bitterly cold it is, he sits beside it for hours waiting for a seal to come up. He watches intently for little bubbles in the water and for ripples on its surface which reveal underwater movements. When he notices these signs of an approaching seal, he grasps his harpoon and waits breathlessly until the big head comes out of the water. But he does not throw his harpoon immediately. He waits until the animal has drawn in a sufficient supply of



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air and is ready to turn down for his dive into the deep. At that moment the broad fat neck of the seal is fully exposed. Just then the Eskimo throws his harpoon with all the force he can muster, burying it deeply with its vicious barbs in the seal's flesh. Had he thrown it an instant sooner it probably would have slid off the hard bone of the seal's nose, and the animal would have been wounded but would not have been caught. Seal meat is very greasy, especially during the winter, but along with walrus meat it is the principal food of the coast Eskimos.

I have always been delighted by the sight of walruses on my airplane trips. My first glimpse of them was a large herd on Walrus Island, as I flew from Churchill to Chesterfield. There must have been several hundred, and I did not pass up the chance of offering them a salute by circling over them. But the walruses misinterpreted my intentions and friendly greetings, and began ponderously to roll off into the water. Then I flew low, barely above their noses. It was amusing to see how they ducked their heads into the salt water, and came up again blowing heavily, only to duck and disappear once more. Never before had they seen so large a bird, or one capable of making so much noise! Walrus meat is the most nourishing food procurable for the Eskimo, and walrus hides for his dogs. For this reason it is the most valued game in the Arctic region. While at Eskimo Point, I was approached by Father Henri Paul Dionne and members of the Canadian Mounted Police with the request that I fly them to a walrus hunt. Father Dionne, who is Canadian,

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is a fully seasoned Eskimo missionary quite used to going on long journeys into the hinterland to visit the Eskimos and is always gladly welcomed by them. This time it was absolutely necessary to get some meat, since no winter provisions had been laid in for the dogs. No ship was available for the trip. Unless I could make the hunt possible for them, all their dogs would starve. Naturally I consented to fly the men to their hunting ground, which was on Walrus Island. There we encountered a large herd of walrus and the hunters bagged all that they wanted. Thus the dogs of Eskimo Point got food, and did not have to be killed.

Today many Eskimos are equipped with rifles. When they have to depend on harpoons, walrus hunting can be very dangerous for them. Herds of walruses are sometimes seen lying on the shore, sometimes on the ice with the bull walruses on guard. At the approach of any danger they bellow and the whole herd plunges into the water. It is difficult for the Eskimos to crawl up close to a herd lying at rest. They try to creep over the rough ice on hands and feet until they are near enough to throw their harpoons but occasionally the walruses put up a fight and inflict serious and even fatal injuries on them. No wonder! They sometimes weigh as much as a ton and their heads alone may be ninety pounds. The skin is three-quarters of an inch thick and after the kill the Eskimo cuts first into that part of the intestine which connects directly with the stomach, his idea being to get the already opened oysters, mussels, crabs and other shell fish which are packed there. Crustacea are the favorite food of walruses and when

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these half-digested shellfish have been eaten by the hunters, the body of the walrus is cut into hunks and distributed among the families which make up the expedition. All this is done on much the same principle as the market basket.

The most formidable foe of the Eskimo, of course, is the polar bear. Father Henry made me a present of a magnificent skin taken from a bear killed by an Eskimo on King William Island. Victory over such an animal is regarded as a deed requiring great skill and courage and no real man, therefore, must miss the chance to face a polar bear, in spite of the fact that many have been killed in these unequal battles. The older Eskimo hunters are distressed to see the bears hunted nowadays with rifles. They consider it cowardly to attack so valiant a fighter with weapons that can be used at long range. When a man stands safely aboard a ship and fires a string of bullets into a swimming polar bear, he does not give his victim much of a chance. The bear whose fur I took home with me had been stabbed by an Eskimo with a knife. His dogs were with him, but the knife was his only weapon. The dogs gripped the bear from behind, which is the tenderest part of his huge bulk—his “heel of Achilles,” and the spot most open to attack. The bear turned viciously on his assailants. To get at them he had to make a semicircle. The dogs immediately flew at him from the other side. He turned again to meet them. But they also turned to torment him once more from the rear. At this moment the bear could think of no better way to protect his precious haunches than to sit down.

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The Eskimo, who had been waiting for this move, ran up from behind and administered the death blow with his long Eskimo knife.

If the bear is not killed with the first blow, the act must be repeated. Victory is not always with the man. Infrequently the infuriated bear crushes his assailant. When a bear has been killed, he must be skinned immediately; otherwise he will quickly freeze into a block of ice. To the Eskimo, as well as to the missionaries, bear meat is a welcome change of diet from walrus ham and seal bacon. When I have had polar bear steaks I have eaten them with great enthusiasm.

The skill and ingenuity with which the Eskimos conduct their bear hunting is illustrated by an incident which happened to an explorer and famous student of Eskimo life. While traveling with an Eskimo companion over a vast expanse of ice, he suddenly noticed at no great distance a giant polar bear. The European immediately raised his rifle, but the Eskimo grabbed his arm and said: "Don't you see that the bear is moving in the direction of our hut? Why not let him get there first and then kill him?" He wanted to save himself the labor of transporting the heavy animal! This is much like the story of the young missionary who stepped out of his snowhut with a loaded rifle in his hand, only to find a large polar bear in front of him. The suddenness of this unexpected visit gave the priest a deathly scare. He had never before seen a polar bear and it did not enter his head to shoot the disturber. With his courage gone he yelled: "A polar bear, a polar bear!"

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All the Eskimo men were absent on a hunt. A woman came running to his aid and asked: "Isn't your rifle loaded?"

Trembling, and not trusting himself to shoot straight, the newcomer to the Arctic answered: "Yes it is!"

Saying to the blushing padre: "This is the way to do it!" she snatched the rifle from his hand and killed the bear with a single shot.

Another polar bear paid a surprise visit to the home of an Eskimo mother and made a big hole in the snow wall with his paw. All the men were hunting, and the woman was alone with a seven-year-old child. There was no rifle or harpoon in the place; only an old knife that the men would not use any more. But there was meat in the snowhouse.

"Give him meat," she said to the child, who promptly threw scraps toward the bear.

Then the woman began to file and sharpen the old knife. "Give him some more," she ordered again, as she tied the sharpened knife to a handle so that the bear could not catch her arm.

Then, cold-bloodedly, she looked at the exposed breast of the bear, took the right position and pierced the brute's heart. A few minutes later she skinned him outside the igloo.

Some Eskimos at Repulse Bay caught a polar bear cub and raised him on a bottle. The jolly youngster became the pet and friend of the whole tribe. He did no one any harm and was a wonderful playmate for the Eskimo children, but the dogs were furiously jealous, and a close watch was kept to see that he came to

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no harm. He lived in the snowhouse with the family and when he wanted to go out for a walk, either the children or one of the grownups kept him company.

One night, in an unguarded moment, the little chap left the snowhut for some reason or other—and a few moments later there was a terrific uproar out of doors. From forty to fifty hungry Eskimo dogs had pounced on the unsuspecting cub, and had devoured him, skin and all, before the Eskimos were sufficiently wide awake to rush to their pet's aid. The children shed bitter tears, for they had lost a loved playmate.

The full-grown polar bear is a serious competitor of the Eskimo in seal hunting for he is king of the frozen northland. Most of his time is spent on the ice, where he hunts seal and catches fish in much the same way as they do themselves. Like their hunters, he sits with admirable perseverance beside a seal's breathing hole in an attitude suggesting a cat waiting for a mouse. As soon as a seal appears, the powerful paw of the bear clamps down on him and drags him out of the water. The meal begins immediately. When the ice breaks up in summer the bear goes ashore. Therefore he follows the banks of the river and becomes a salmon fisher. This is usually a lean season for him.

To hunt polar bears when they are in the water entails serious dangers for the Eskimo because the bears are excellent swimmers and a good match in nimbleness and speed for the best handled canoe. Woe to the hunter when a maddened bear pounces on his kayak

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with enormous claws and tears its light leather covering to shreds!

More gentle in his habits is the reindeer. Brother Beaudoin and I have often had a bird's-eye view on our flights of large herds of reindeer. In the spring season they leave the forests to the south in herds of anything from twenty to a thousand, to wander north toward the barrens. In the autumn they return and go in search of lichens and moss. During the winter they roam in small groups and have to paw through the snow to find the lichens.

The reindeer is grayish-brown and a little larger than a Virginia deer. Whenever I undertook to whirl along directly over one of those herds, it was a pleasure to look at their broad, spadelike antlers. I have never harried them, although they would run as fast as they could beneath us, and every now and then would look upward with frightened eyes. Commercial air pilots who fly the Mackenzie River route have told me that the reindeer quickly become accustomed to airplanes and will not run when they see them flying their route regularly. Where I was flying, my plane was the first to pass, so naturally they were more frightened and ran at top speed.

To inland Eskimos the reindeer is the equivalent of their daily bread. Its flesh is their food. Its skin supplies them with clothing. From its sinews they prepare their threads and ropes, and for all these purposes reindeer are killed by the hundred. In summer they are driven into the water and are then speared, but when the Eskimos are equipped with rifles no skill is required

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for the slaughter. Wherever these animals are brought down the Eskimos establish their supply bases for the winter. The meat is cut into large pieces and stacked. Then an enclosure of heavy stones is built to protect it from dogs or other marauding animals. No Eskimo will ever think of taking anything out of the supply base of another Eskimo unless he is in real danger of starvation. In such a case he will notify the owner at the earliest opportunity and restore the equivalent of the supplies taken.

The Eskimo is essentially a nomad who travels from one hunting ground to another and wherever he hunts he builds his storage quarters. If unsuccessful, he wanders off in search of one of his supply bases, but if these are empty, he must go hungry and perhaps starve.

The hunt for foxes in the North is on a more commercial basis. At the beginning of the twentieth century the white fur of an Arctic fox came into the possession of a European *prima donna*. It was so becoming that it became a topic of lively discussion in feminine circles. Businessmen scented the possibilities of fancy profits and thus Arctic fox skins came into fashion. The Hudson Bay Company soon saw the need of opening trading posts in the Arctic to satisfy this whim. The first was established at Chesterfield Inlet shortly before the World War. In the southern part of the Northwest Territory wonderful silver foxes, cross foxes, red foxes, mink and other furry animals are to be found, and in the Arctic proper both white and blue foxes can be trapped. The Hudson Bay Company has now penetrated as far north as the seventy-second degree of



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latitude, and has established there the northernmost trading post in the world. The foxes, too, seem to consider this latitude just about the limit of their endurance.

The Eskimos catch them in traps which are furnished by the company. They must not be shot, for the skins must be without scratch or hole. When caught in these traps the foxes freeze to death. Their flesh is eaten by the Eskimos and their valuable pelts are traded in with the company. In one of their warehouses I once saw the skins of twenty-eight hundred white or snow foxes, but I sometimes feel, walking up Fifth Avenue, as if there are more silver and white foxes in New York than in the Arctic, whether genuine or not.

# 12

## CANNIBALISM

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CANNIBALISM is by no means unknown among the Eskimos. At Chesterfield Inlet I met an Eskimo family consisting of a father, mother and two fine children. They had just returned from a hunt. I was startled when one of the Brothers at the mission station told me that a few years earlier the woman had eaten her first husband. At that time she was a follower of paganism. I gathered additional details a little later when I told the Bishop that this story was too gruesome to be believed. But he replied very gravely: "Those poor people were actually starving, and did not know where to find food to sustain their lives. The woman was stronger than her husband, so she killed him, and ate him."

Later she accepted the Catholic faith and so did her

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second husband but, looking at them, I could not rid myself of the thought: "Who in the wide world would want to become second husband to a woman who has murdered and eaten her first? And who in the wide world could actually bring himself to call this woman 'my darling'?"

The Eskimos who live along the coast of North America, in the Barren Grounds, around Hudson Bay, and on the islands of the Polar Sea, frequently have to endure, even nowadays, deadly seasons of scarcity and hunger. Rasmussen reported that in 1919, three years before his arrival, eighteen Seal-Eskimos had died at Simpson Straits. Again and again they had returned empty-handed from the seal hunt. A strange disease had made its appearance among them. Their legs suddenly became completely paralyzed; they collapsed upon the ice and froze to death. In the previous year, seven persons had died of starvation north of Cape Britannia. Premature mild weather had broken up the ice and had made it impossible to catch seals.

Cannibalism is common among the Seal-Eskimos, although excuses were offered for all the instances brought to Rasmussen's attention and everybody placed responsibility on the higher powers. An Eskimo named Samik, an excellent hunter and a much respected medicine man, told Rasmussen that many Eskimos ate human flesh, not out of greediness, but merely to save their own lives, and only after long continued suffering had enfeebled them so much that in many cases they had become mentally deranged. One winter, when all the hunting had been unsuccessful, and day after day passed

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with no food in sight, the living began to feed on the dead. Then an Eskimo named Tunneges suddenly became frantic and deranged. He called upon the spirits. Soon he declared that he had received an answer out of the air, telling him to save himself by eating his wife. At first he cut small pieces out of her body and ate them. Then larger pieces. Suddenly he stabbed and cut like one possessed until he had killed her. He then lived off her flesh.

An equally horrible fate overtook the woman Nag-fag. During a season in which there was no hunting she gave birth to a child. The people about her were emaciated and dying of hunger. What business had the little one in that environment? She choked the child to death; let it freeze stiff, and then ate its flesh. Next day her neighbors caught a seal. They now had food to save the woman's life. But from that day Nag-fag was lame. This happened, it was said, because she had eaten a part of herself.

During the two years of his journeys through unexplored Eskimo territory, Rasmussen listed the married couples and the children he met, and his findings paint a tragic picture of the Seal-Eskimos. In one locality eighteen married couples were listed, to whom ninety-six children had been born. Thirty-eight of them, all baby girls, had been killed. In one tribe of two hundred and fifty-nine Eskimos, there were one hundred and fifty men, and only one hundred and nine women. These few figures vividly reveal the grim battle for bare existence which these poor people have to fight day after day. Their unspeakable poverty seems

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to rob them of all ordinary moral sensibilities, for in no other way is it possible to explain how a mother can throw to the wild beasts, or kill with her own hands, the child to whom she has just given painful birth.

Unfortunate is the Eskimo girl who has not been promised in marriage from infancy to a family with a boy. She must die, because she is superfluous in pagan eyes. When she cannot be useful, a daughter is only a source of worry and expense. As soon as she is able to assist with household tasks she is given in marriage, and must leave her family. If an Eskimo youth wants to marry he must be prepared for killing and murder. Since there are fewer girls than boys, young men frequently find it difficult to get wives. Now and again they meet a rival who has two or three, in spite of the scarcity of women. Then the issue is decided by the knife and the weaker pays with his life.

When I encountered Eskimos who had eaten human flesh, I felt a shudder pass through me, but they looked harmless enough, and quite incapable of doing the slightest injury to anybody. The cannibalism which has occurred in the Arctic will be repeated literally as long as hunger and cold grind and crush the poorest of the poor inhabitants of our globe. It is not a manifestation of lust for blood, but of poverty and misery. Their hunger drives them insane. While mentally deranged, they do what they never would do if they had a piece of bread with which to still the pangs of famine.

Travelers meeting these people for the first time are apt to think of them as a happy race. It is true that

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their habitual temperament seems to be that of joyfulness. They appear to be as happy as children, but actually their contentment is a seasonal factor. When they have enough to eat they are happy and playful. When they suffer want and go hungry—as they often do—they cease laughing. Frequently enough they live in dire distress. At such times it is not so surprising that there should be reports of murder, manslaughter and cannibalism among them.

Next to food, iron is a primary necessity to them. They will walk many miles to get a small piece of it. If they know that some has been hidden under a house, they will tear the whole house down to find it. If a knife, a trap or a harpoon is forgotten, or falls from the dog sled when moving camp, it then belongs to the man who finds it and the owner has to pay to get it back.

This code helps to make people careful in handling the precious ore. When Eskimos saw white men for the first time, they soon noticed the abundant supply of iron on board their ships. Concluding that the stranger would not miss a knife, an axe, a teacup or other small appliance, they promptly helped themselves to the white man's stores. When he objected, they began to steal, and in quite a skillful way. Their code was that to steal was nothing, but to get caught was a disgrace sufficient to make them blush and feel revengeful. Thus, fights and even murders occurred when the white men and the Eskimos clashed.

A trader tells a typical story of his experience in the neighborhood of Great Bear Lake on one of his explora-

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tion and trading trips. The Eskimos came to him offering to exchange reindeer and sealskins for iron. He agreed. Standing in front of his tent he examined the skins, threw them behind him into the tent, and paid out his iron in exchange. The row of men coming with skins seemed endless. Bartering went on until there was no iron left. Then the leader of the Eskimos who had been seated in the tent rose to say good-by. They shook hands with him very cordially. He was equally warm in his greetings and gestures of good will. After the last Eskimo had departed, the merchant stepped back into his tent to count and to pack the purchased furs, but there wasn't one in sight. While one group of Eskimos had held his attention by displaying their skins out in front, another had slyly and silently lifted the tent flap at the back, had extracted the newly bought furs, and had sold them to him three, four, five times over. Then to finish the job in flawless fashion, after all his supplies of iron, tea and tobacco were gone, they stole the last batch of furs and made off with them!

Many of the pagan Eskimos do not hesitate to kill for the sake of satisfying their covetous desires. Siringstone, Franklin, Richardson and Hooper had to face such murderers. All of them saved their lives only by using their guns. In 1912 two explorers, Street and Radford, were struck down with their own axes. Doubtless many other explorers and fur traders, whose bodies and belongings never have been found, perished in the same way and for the same reasons. These unquestioned facts have led to the general impression that

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the Eskimos are naturally inclined to lying, thieving and murder. But this is a misleading estimate of the picture as a whole. When not exposed to temptation they are instinctively frank, honest and friendly. Nevertheless, this occasional disposition, together with their pagan morality, has proved to be a serious hindrance to the spread of the gospel among them. Superstition and sorcery have been even graver barriers. But they are very eager to learn, and are in no wise poorly equipped for intellectual advancement. They listen attentively, grasp quickly and have retentive memories. Scientists, as well as missionaries, have admired their cultural development, which shows a high degree of intelligence and skill. Among their natural virtues, their hospitality is the most extraordinary. They actually regard the stranger whom they receive into their homes as the master of the house.

Shortly after his first arrival among the Eskimos, one of the Oblate Fathers recorded that he was received by them with manifestations of wholehearted joy. All the while he stayed at their camp he was treated as a guest of honor. There was only one tent. The best place in it was given to him and he could rule there like a monarch. When the others wanted to come in they first begged his permission and at meal-time the choicest morsels were set before him.



# 13

## RELIGION OF THE ESKIMO

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**H**AS the Eskimo any definite religion? A superficial observer may conclude that he has nothing more than a low form of belief in evil spirits. Yet the Eskimo has a real, though vague, concept of a supreme being. He knows that there is an *anuta*—a Father—and he believes in a life beyond the present. He pictures the hereafter as an upper and lower realm, stocked with a multitude of reindeer, walrus and fish, where everyone may hunt and eat according to his heart's desire. I am speaking now of the pagan Eskimo.

The question which causes him constant worry, however, is that of the spirits which surround him. No matter what he does, he thinks of definite spirits which may help or harm him. In order to make them kindly disposed he feels that he must scrupulously carry out

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certain established forms when it comes to hunting, to matters of clothing, to eating and drinking, to the birth of his children, to the bestowal of names on them, and to dying. Under threat of penalty it is his duty to do certain things and abstain from others, in accordance with the wishes of the spirits. Certain magical formulas, carefully handed down from father to son, must be used, especially in cases of illness or other misfortune.

The fate of the Eskimos in their white hell is very hard. They are condemned to live the whole year through amid snow and ice, with never a warming fire. The desperate struggle for a bare existence continues year after year. With all this there is among the non-Christian Eskimo families an abysmal spiritual darkness, a paganism which makes one shudder. The very act of prayer seems entirely unknown to them, and the ignominy and degradation to which pagan women must submit cannot be put into words. Even before she is born, or on the day of her birth, a girl is sold for life. As a wife she has no rights, but is a slave to the caprices and passions of her pagan husband, who may ill-treat and abuse her, cast her out, and do what he wishes with her. These poor women often appeal to the missionaries for aid which they, alas, are unable to give. The enslaved woman has no choice but to submit smilingly to the treatment given her, if she wants to escape cruel beatings.

A girl seems to have no value whatever. If a prospective husband has not been found for her before she is eight days old she is doomed to die. Sometimes she is throttled, sometimes allowed to freeze to death, or

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else is killed in some other inconspicuous way. The slaughter of a girl without prospects of marriage is not considered wrong and sinful by the pagan Eskimos. They argue that no guardian spirit has any claim on her, nor any just grounds for taking offense over her death.

When a Catholic missionary once reproached a pagan Eskimo mother for having deliberately choked her newborn daughter to death, she expressed surprise at his words and without the least sign of sorrow or regret, said to him: "Father, I am sure from the way you scold me, that you have made a mistake. You think it was a boy whom I choked, but it was only a girl!"

The paganism of the Eskimos is darker, colder, and more desolate than their own Arctic night, for the sun of faith never shines on them, and its light and warmth, which are so desperately needed, never enter into their lives and hearts.

As long as they remain pagans, they are convinced that the Catholic missionary is their enemy; they will hate him and will make their hatred plainly known. Either they will ridicule him consistently and scoff at everything they see in the church, or else show an icy coldness which hurts even more. But, once converted to the Catholic faith, the Eskimos no longer doubt that the missionary is their best friend. Bishop Turquetil is venerated as a grandfather. One reason why they honor and love the missionaries is that they aid them in so many ways. They instruct the children, administer the Holy Sacraments, hear confessions, and make long journeys to visit and to console the sick and the dying. Be-

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cause of all these things, and because the missionaries wish to lead them to grace, the Eskimo is grateful.

When he tries to picture heaven for himself he naturally thinks of a few details which do not stand out prominently in our picture. He is convinced that when he enters heaven he will find it a place where he will always have his fill to eat. One of the particular joys will be that of seeing untold numbers of seals, walruses, reindeer and fish. Never again will he need to go hungry. Whenever he wishes he may eat and be satisfied. The missionaries do not rob the Eskimos of these joyous and pleasant fancies, but rather encourage them and speak of heaven as a place of unending happiness and plenty, and the Eskimos take delight in the anticipation of these joys.

In this way they may get a glimpse, as in a mirror, of what it means to be allowed to see God. It is my personal belief, however, that the average Eskimo thinks of the vision of God only as of an increase in his personal well-being, and that in portraying supreme happiness he reverts again and again, as a matter of first principles, to the vision of seals, walruses, reindeer and fish.

It is interesting to know how he manages to picture hell. I once read in an American paper that the missionaries in the Arctic were not permitted to preach to the Eskimos on that subject, since if anyone were to preach of the warmth of hell, the Eskimos might wish to go there. The witty reporter, no doubt, gave his readers a laugh, but obviously he had never visited the

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Arctic; otherwise he would have known that nobody is more afraid of fire and of heat than the Eskimo.

When one of the Mounted Police finds his cottage crowded with Eskimo visitors—perhaps with a large group that has been hanging around all day—and wants them to go home, he will find it futile to hint that they take their leave. This would only make them stay the longer. Neither can he speak sharply to them, for he is a kindhearted man, and he likes them. What then can he do?

Without attracting any special attention he walks over to the stove. The government has shipped to him by way of the icebreaking steamer several tons of coal for use during the winter. He puts ten scoops on the fire and keeps on telling stories to the Eskimos. They soon begin to sweat. In a little while the ten scoops of coal are a fiery red. The trooper puts on ten more. The glowing stove turns white. By this time his guests are restless. It is not water that is oozing from their pores, but pure oil. It is standing on their foreheads and cheeks, and is running in tiny streamlets down their noses. The Eskimos can sit still no longer. An itchy feeling runs over them from head to toe. Though the sergeant looks comfortable enough, clad only in shirt and trousers, it is so hot in the cottage that the Eskimos look as if roasted in a Turkish bath. As the sergeant turns for the third time to put another ten shovels of coal on the waning fire, the Eskimos run out as if shot from a cannon. There is no need of more storytelling. The trooper has managed affairs without hurting anybody's feelings.

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One of the Fathers hired an Eskimo as a kitchen boy. After the first meal he heated water to wash the dishes, and placed it before the Eskimo, telling him to put the plates and dishes in the hot water, because it would quickly remove the grease. The Eskimo very conscientiously and deliberately put all the plates and dishes in the hot water. He could not be persuaded, however, to dip his hands into it, at least not beyond the finger tips. Finally the Father saw no way out of the situation except to wash the dishes himself. The Eskimo hates nothing so much as he hates hot water, and a hot stove.

The missionaries need not hesitate, therefore, to preach about hell. If hell, indeed, were no hotter than a snowhouse, the Eskimos might not object to going there. But if I tell them that hell has the same temperature as boiling water or the sergeant's red hot stove, they are ready to run and to do everything within their power to escape that place of terror.

Having to struggle relentlessly for existence and to adapt himself constantly to the hardest living conditions, the Eskimo is forced to keep his eyes ever on what is most essential. Thus he becomes an enemy of all superficial childish flattery and insincerity. Bishop Turquetil says of them: "They are the most worthy (that is, the best prepared) people for the reception of the gospel." He believes that after a few generations they will be fit to supply their own priests out of their own ranks. To watch them while they are at prayer is an incentive to devotion.

The Catholic mission stations erected in the eastern

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section of the Arctic are thirteen in number. Each one is a center for a large district and they all lie at the edge of the sea. As the Eskimos are nomads and are constantly on the move from one hunting ground to another, they visit the mission station only two or three times in the year. A trading post of the Hudson Bay Company is usually found near the mission station, and whenever the Eskimos come to barter the trophies of their hunt—pelts of white fox, blue fox and polar bears, tusks of the walrus, ivory, sealskins and other things—they also attend to their religious obligations. They assist at Mass each day and receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. This season might be called "flood tide" at the little churches. When the Eskimos depart again after a stay of two or three weeks, a long-drawn-out season of "ebb tide" then sets in at the church. If from two to three hundred families attend church when the tide is high, not more than one or two, who happen to make their homes near the mission and trading post, may be there when it is low and quite frequently the priest at the church is all alone. During these slack seasons, however, the missionary usually harnesses his dogs to the sled and visits his flock in the far corners of the surrounding wastes of ice and snow.

What a transformation it would make if there were a few airplanes in the enormous Vicariate of Hudson Bay to establish regular mission facilities in the far-flung Eskimo camps! A church which flies to the aid of the widely scattered Eskimo nomads seems to me a

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type of church worth striving for in that territory and the Catholic Eskimos would be happy if they could feel assured of this full provision for all their religious needs. No longer would there be lengthy ebb tides in the mission churches on the coast of the Arctic Ocean—away from the Eskimo hunting grounds, for “flying chapels” would make the rounds from one Eskimo camp to another. I never failed to feel this when I made my own flights, in the far Arctic, carrying with me a painting by Testorpf, which serves as the reredos over my altar. The painting shows the Heavenly Queen with the Divine Child. She is pictured coming down from heaven and holding up her Son to the gaze of the astonished Eskimos. The Madonna is aureoled in the rays of the northern lights, which fold about her like an iridescent mantle floating down from the sky toward the everlasting ice and snow below her. This heavenly cloak of the Madonna covers, on the left side of the picture, the figures of kneeling Eskimos—men, girls, and mothers with their babes in their arms. On the right the heavenly cloak of northern lights falls over my airplane and myself—the “Flying Priest.” I am pictured praying before a cross commemorative of the tragic death of a brave Oblate missionary. Below the altarpiece the words “Our Lady of the Snows” are painted in Gothic script.

“Our Lady of the Snows” is indeed a mother to the Eskimos, a protectress who spreads her mantle over these poorest and most desolate of her children to bring them from the night of paganism to the light of faith.



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One day an Eskimo family—father, mother and child—knelt devoutly before the altarpiece “Our Lady of the Snows.” The father prayed silently and earnestly. The mother holding the right hand of her child, helped her to make the sign of the Holy Cross on her forehead, breast and shoulders, just as my own mother did for me in my very young days. Then the Eskimo mother prayed aloud, slowly and devoutly, together with the child:

“Hail Mary—full of grace—the Lord is with thee—Blessed art Thou amongst women—and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.—Holy Mary—Mother of God—pray for us sinners—now and at the hour of our death, Amen.”

It seemed to me as if I heard the rustling of the mantle which the mother of God, “Our Lady of the Snows,” folds protectingly over the Eskimos.

One remarkable ceremony which I shall always remember was the first Episcopal consecration in the Arctic, which took place at Chesterfield Inlet in August, 1937. The three consecrating Bishops were Bishop Turquetil, Bishop Gabriel Breynat, of Mackenzie, and Bishop Martin LaJeunesse, of Le Pas, Manitoba. Armand Clabaut, who had labored successfully for ten years as a missionary among the Eskimos, was the priest consecrated; at the time he was the youngest missionary Bishop in the world. Among those who attended were Archbishop Sinnott, of Winnipeg, Archbishop Yelle of St. Boniface, Monsignor Blair of the Catholic Church

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Extension Society of Canada, Father Provincial Gilles Marchand, Father Provincial Langlois, Vicar General Mansoz, of Mackenzie, Monsignor Camirand of Nicolet, and myself. From the standpoint of national origins these visitors represented seven countries.

The little harbor of Chesterfield seemed quite busy with the *M. F. Therese*, the Canadian Government steamer *Ocean Eagle* and my seaplane *The Flying Cross* all poised on the water. The ceremonies of the consecration made a profound impression on the Eskimos for they were the first really solemn Episcopal ceremonies that they had ever seen.

Afterward the Eskimo children, who had observed everything with manifest seriousness, began playing a game of Episcopal consecration and of solemn pontifical Mass. They tried to excel one another, especially in imparting the kiss of peace and in genuflecting to kiss an imaginary Bishop's ring. We were all amazed to see how closely the children had observed the various parts of the ceremony and how skillfully they played their parts.

The administration of the Sacraments to a good and devout mission flock, even if it is the poorest in the world, compensates the missionary for all the hardships, trials and sacrifices of his calling, particularly when he remembers that formerly the Eskimos believed only in evil spirits. I can remember a sermon preached by Bishop Clabaut—*a light shines in darkness*. The Eskimos were listening intently—weather-hardened men, brave women who followed their men on all their journeys through ice and snow, who carried their babes

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upon their backs in cowls, and warmed and nourished them at their breasts. The Eskimos sang in their little mission church, not very melodiously, but from their hearts. They were kneeling . . . praying . . . they believed.

# 14

## COMRADES UNTO DEATH

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ONLY such people travel in the Arctic as have business there—explorers, mounted police, fur traders, and missionaries, and their most faithful traveling companions are their Eskimo dogs. These dogs never grow weary of pulling the heavy sledge, and they gladden the hearts of their masters by their constant readiness for work. In the morning they wait impatiently for the moment when they are to be harnessed to the sledge and with joyous barking they begin their day's work. When ice and snow are bad, they cover a distance of from ten to fifteen miles a day, but when weather conditions are good, they may go as far as fifty miles.

The dogs continue to serve until they drop dead in their harness. Even when dead a dog may be useful, for then he may serve his master as food. A few years ago

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the dead bodies of a missionary and his sledge dog were found close together—frozen stiff—comrades unto death. More recently a missionary was seen shedding tears when his guide dog, the leader, collapsed and died.

Experience with dogs in the Arctic has proved that a female makes the better leader. She runs ahead of the team, often dancing and capering like a ballerina. Pulling the sled is not part of her work. That is the huskies' job. All that is expected of her is to listen to every whistle call and order of the driver, to catch every signal and to set the pace and direction for the team. Usually, however, there is another dog who plays an equally important role. There must be a good "boss" as well as a good leader and often they are not identical. It is always the strongest dog who makes himself the real overlord. While running in harness he is not particularly noticeable. He pulls as hard as he can and occasionally he growls and snaps at his colleagues. That is his only display of authority. But it is quite different when the team has been unhitched and the dogs are allowed to run around freely. At once he becomes master. Every one of his kennel companions must follow him. Woe to him who disobeys. He will be well bitten and badly torn.

The "boss" of the mission team at Repulse Bay, a very strong dog, was called Max. Occasionally he went in search of adventure and quarrels with other dog teams. All his huskies followed him, giving and taking their share in every fight, however it ended. All went well for several years. Then jealousy of Max's prestige and power stirred up Louis, a subject husky. Thinking

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himself as strong or stronger, he deliberately picked a quarrel with the "boss" and was soon involved in a furious fight. He gave a good account of himself. They bit and tore each other savagely, and sank their teeth so deeply and tenaciously that once, when they rolled down hill together, neither let go his grip. Max emerged the victor. Louis, bleeding from many gaping holes in his hide, whimpered his way back to his own corner.

Outwardly he was obedient to Max after this trial of strength, but inwardly he was determined to lay the tyrant low. He waited a full year. Meanwhile he strayed off and visited other dog teams, not for cordiality's sake, but to get practice and to test his strength. Max saw to it that no other member of the team ran with Louis to help him in his battles. It was a season of severe training for the ambitious youth. But as the days passed he became more and more expert in battle, and grew increasingly confident of his strength and skill.

At last he felt ready for a decisive battle, and threw himself upon Max. The conflict lasted an hour. Louis was the victor; the upstart was on top; the team had a new "boss." Thereafter no dog challenged Louis. Max took his defeat so hard that he did not go back to the team. He ran off into the wilderness of ice and snow, and was never seen again.

One night I was lying in my sleeping bag in a room on the first floor of the mission station. Outside the house the dogs were barking. This was nothing unusual, but something special seemed to be up that evening. The dogs were restless, but no one could figure out the reason. The missionaries and the Eskimos went to sleep,

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leaving it to the animals themselves to settle their differences. To me it looked as if the trouble were steadily growing more serious. I crawled out of my sleeping bag, opened the window, and looked down, as from a balcony, upon a large wave or billow made up of dogs moving to and fro. The clouds were hanging low in the dark sky so that I could not distinguish clearly what was happening.

From forty to fifty of them were gathered together in front of the mission's small storage plant. At first every dog seemed to snarl at every other dog—nothing more. Then, every little while, some one dog flew at another of the pack and buried his sharp wolf's teeth in his victim's flank. This, too, was only a prelude—a mere sham battle, or a trial of the sharpness of his fangs. A few dogs, the strongest among them, walked through the growling congregation—proud, conscious of their strength, with tails raised high. The weaker dogs were trembling and tucked their tails between their legs to keep them from shaking even more.

I had the impression that several of the dogs were trying to jump up onto a speaker's rostrum, and to address the crowd. Suddenly a deathlike silence. The two most powerful ones stood facing each other. As if by command, the rest began to gather behind either leader. They drew up in battle array, not as on parade-grounds, but in a manner which left no doubt that an attack was imminent.

The Arctic Circle was the battle line. North of it stood the mission dogs and all that were friendly to their cause, behind the "boss" of the mission sled-team,

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whom they recognized as their militant bishop. South of the Arctic Circle were gathered the dogs of the infidels—that is, of those Eskimos who were not members of the mission flock. With the conviction of having justice on his side—for the storage plant and the object that looked like a speaker's platform, were undoubtedly mission property—the “boss” of the mission team threw himself upon the “chief” of the infidels. That was the signal for the battle of the dogs to begin.

What followed took my breath away. The mission forces sprang at the throats of the heathen, who in turn tried to break the necks of their enemies. I saw a dark tangled pile of dogs, yelping, howling, battling, and trying constantly to get near the storehouse. Every dog tried at least once to jump up on the speaker's rostrum. But as soon as he was on top of it and started to growl at the battling furies about him, three other dogs were at his throat to pull him down. At last the rostrum tumbled and fell over on its side. Now, instead of jumping onto it, all the dogs seemed to want to crawl into it—but as soon as one succeeded, the teeth of several others fastened on him and pulled him out. Some of the wounded dogs howled most pitifully.

The battle lasted about twenty minutes. I was amazed that none of the Eskimos had come out of their sleeping bags to interfere and calm the spirits of the dogs with a few well-aimed stones. They all seemed to be sound asleep and dreaming of the seals which they expected to catch the following day. From my place at the window I shouted strong words of rebuke at the disturbers of the peace. I appealed to the consciences



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of our mission dogs and begged them to remember the pious training they had received. Probably my Eskimo was so bad that the dogs took my protests as words of encouragement. At any rate, they threw themselves again and again into the battle and onto the object of connection—the low speaker's rostrum.

At last the battle ended. Plenty of blood had flowed. The growling ceased. The weary fighters slunk away and dispersed. The hero of the battle lay down to sleep inside the upset speaker's rostrum. Next morning I saw one whose whole back was ripped open. Others ran around on three legs; some hobbled on two. Several of them had their ears half bitten off, and many had holes in their coats and breeches. But by then the veil was lifted from the mystery. The rostrum was a large drum which originally had held gasoline. The previous day, however, it had been used as a container for the meat from two seals. Now it became clear to me why all the dogs wanted to jump on top of the rostrum. Neither the mission nor the heathen troops had fought for a just and noble cause. All of them had come to steal, and, if necessary, to battle for their loot.

When Father Lacroix saw the empty gasoline drum in the morning and heard from me the story of the battle, he merely smiled and, without bothering to find fault with the dogs, said: "They have done that before."

This was the battle of the dogs at the Arctic Circle. Their lives as a whole are an interesting part of mission work in this region. Every time the church bell at any of our Arctic missions rings out, the dogs begin to howl. One sounds the first note, two others chime in,

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then twenty, then all of them. They raise their heads toward heaven, close their eyes to shut out all distractions, sit down in the snow and howl as only Eskimo dogs can howl, in all possible keys, and for as long as the mission bell keeps ringing. They don't allow anything to interfere with this choral exhibition. They stop eating, they stop quarreling, they stop annoying their keepers. One of their practices, however, is not in the Catholic tradition. They always sit on their haunches when the bell rings for prayers—a practice that would be frowned on by the Church!

I had occasion to give three of the monastery dogs a thorough thrashing one time. I had loosened from her chain a fine female dog who was eager to join in the play of two other dogs who were running in circles and chasing each other in the snow. At once she ganged up with the other two and the three of them set off in a straight line to attack a strange dog that was standing some distance away watching them. I determined on immediate intervention and gave the three sound thrashings. Since might is right in the dog world, I had to show them that I held the whip and could command them. All Eskimo dogs have a strong streak of the savage in them. With them the weaker animal simply has no right to exist. Even in their own teams the stronger ones go for the feeble, and if one of the missionaries stumbles and falls while passing through a group of his own dogs, it is more than likely that they will regard this as a sign of weakness and snap at him. I know of a woman and child who, while traveling by dog sled, fell from their seats and were immediately

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pounced upon by the dogs and bitten to death within a few seconds.

When I first encountered the Eskimo dogs I felt sorry for them. They had to sleep outdoors at a temperature of forty-five degrees below zero. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw them bedding themselves comfortably in the snow, one after the other, and then even bathing in it. Brother Lavoie, whose duty it was to look after them, said to me: "What the warm beaches of Florida are to Americans, the fine white snow of the Arctic is to the Eskimo dog."

I have always loved dogs and I could not fail to admire the Eskimo species. A large snow-white one became my favorite. His name was "Wabask," meaning "White Bear." I used to take him a choice morsel every day, and as often as I could, I went with Brother Lavoie to watch the feeding of the dogs and to listen to their joyous baying and barking. One of them once bit my hand from sheer enthusiasm over the fact that it was feeding time. Their zest for food is apt to carry them away. Once, when I was filming my Arctic pictures in this same region, we turned the sled upside down at our "location," so that the dogs could not run off with it. I rashly threw a piece of sandwich to the two nearest me. This was taken by all nine dogs of the team as a signal for assault upon me. I found myself surrounded by nine wide-open mouths with sharp white fangs bared. The dogs jumped up, snapped at my gloves, tore them from my hands. They had no intention of hurting me, but just as one might fail to appreciate having a baby elephant step on one's toes, so I disliked being pawed

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by those Eskimo dogs who were hungry for food. The Brother with the whip was some distance away, so I shook them off as best I could.

The Eskimo sled is not constructed like that of the Indians, which is built of wood, a commodity of which the Indians have an ample supply. The Eskimo variety has two poles which serve as runners. They are made either of driftwood or of the bones of walrus and reindeer. The number of dogs used as draft animals depends upon the owner's ability to feed them. I have seen sleds drawn by only two dogs. In this case the Eskimos themselves helped to pull them. I have seen others drawn by twenty dogs, with the whole family riding on the sled.

The Indians harness their dogs single file, one behind the other, because they have to follow a trail which leads through forests. The Eskimo knows no forests. He travels over the open barrens or the frozen sea. The guide dog runs first and is fastened to the longest trace. But every dog has his entirely separate trace. When the road is clear and unobstructed the animals are able to run abreast. Viewed from the driver's seat, the traces look like so many fingers spread out from the driver's hand, with a dog at the tip of each finger.

To make the sled runners smooth and sleek, the Eskimo gathers reindeer lichens, cleans them carefully, soaks them in water, and wraps them around the runners. Sometimes he has to melt snow upon his own breast to obtain water for this bandaging process. After this improvised covering has been frozen the runners meet with very little friction from the snow and ice

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over which they glide. Then it is easy to draw the sled, but when the ice on the runners begins to wear off, the process of icing them has to be repeated. The dogs and the sleds are a constant source of care and discussion in the dark night of the Arctic.

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THE place which I first selected as the main base for my mission flying in the Arctic was Fort Albany on James Bay. The natives are Cree Indians who live by hunting game in their vast forests. Their territory is sub-Arctic, but the temperature drops as low as fifty degrees below zero at times, and the storms raging over the bay are as chilly and piercing as those I encountered later in the real Arctic, although the vast forests cushion their impact and provide some shelter.

Tragedy is inseparably connected with James Bay, which is the southernmost projection of Hudson Bay. Here Henry Hudson and one of his sons were the victims of a mutiny. The rebellious crew tied them with ropes, put them without food in a small boat, and abandoned them to the stormy sea. Thus James Bay became the grave of the famous explorer.

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There are numerous swamps all around the bay and one of my chief recollections of Moosonee is the swarms of mosquitoes that make this region their hunting ground when the ice thaws. It is different in winter when the north wind blows with fury. Here I got my first touch of Arctic weather. Two minutes' walk took me from the mission buildings to a great forest of magnificent firs and pines, with clumps of smaller trees in the clearings. It had been snowing for several weeks and every tree from the tiniest to the tallest was mantled in white. It was a real joy to tramp through the forest on my snowshoes and take pictures of this fairy-like scenery, but after the north wind had raged for three days, forcing men and animals to stay in their homes and burrows, I found that the north wind had ripped the velvety snow coverings to tatters, and had torn the last shimmering snowflake from every twig and branch, so that the forest was stripped bare. Nothing had escaped its fury and the smaller trees, which had been bending under their weight of ice and snow, were at last freed from their burden.

The mission at Fort Albany has a staff of two priests and fifteen Brothers. In the school, which is managed by twelve Sisters, are about a hundred Indian children. Once during the summer the mail comes by boat, and once during the winter by dog sled, for James Bay is one of the inclement ice missions, although only five hundred miles by air from Montreal. Here the priests busy themselves teaching Indians to read and write their mother tongue, as well as English and French, just as members of the religious orders centuries ago taught our ancestors slowly and patiently how to read, write

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and develop skills more important than fighting battles and lounging about on bearskins.

The Indians, as well as the Eskimos, respond well to this training and since they have come to know us, they no longer seek to scalp us. Nearly all the Indians of the northern territories of Canada are employed as hunters in the service of the various fur-trading companies, but particularly of the Hudson Bay Company, which has been functioning since 1670. Of the 4,305 Indians living in the James Bay mission territory, 975 have been won to the Catholic faith.

On my first visit to Fort Albany I was puzzled by the sight of a colony of small wooden pavilions. The timber used in building them had been cut in the near-by forest, and the idea of building them near the Catholic Church had been conceived by Father Bilodean, Superior of the mission.

I soon learned why the city of wooden tents stood there. All through the summer and winter, while roaming over their hunting grounds, the Indians live in tents or wigwams. Two or three times a year they come to the mission station when they turn in their foxskins and other booty for food, ammunition and sundry necessities at the Hudson Bay Post. They are so completely accustomed to living in round tents or wigwams that they don't feel at home in four-cornered or square houses and are still more uncomfortable in two-storied houses where they "walk on one another's heads."

So Father Bilodean conceived the idea of building permanent wooden tents for them. The first one, which served as a model for all the others, was built by the



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Brothers and now four of them live in it. There is a stove in the center of the tent and a pile of wood lies beside the stove. The interior is dry and warm. Every Indian family now has one of these wooden tents near the church. Each family is allotted its own plot of ground and the colony is divided symmetrically by streets which spread, concentric fashion, from the church. It seems to be a satisfactory solution of their housing problem!

When they return weary and exhausted from their hunting grounds they are eager to move into these wooden tents which, during their absence, have been looked after by the mission Brothers. Soon fires are lit in the stoves. Bread is supplied by the mission. Game is brought in from the hunt. Great quantities of tea are brewed, the pipe of peace is smoked and a festive spirit reigns among the wooden tents.

On the second approach to my work in this region I took off on frozen grass from St. Hubert's airport, Montreal. For two weeks I had lingered in the city waiting for a fall of snow. The wheels of the landing gear of *The Flying Cross* had been replaced by skis. I had never before flown in an airplane fitted with skis, and they looked to me like oversized slippers. Although January was half over, not a single flake of snow had fallen. In forty years the snow had never been so late in coming.

The grass was frozen at the airport and occasional puddles of water were covered with ice. The idea of taking off on snow-runners over frozen grass seemed fantastic to me at first but Alex Schneider, a skilled

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pilot, told me I need have no fear, although there might be considerable rattling as I slid over the frozen pools of water.

I asked him to jump in with me for a trial start. As soon as we got under way there was a terrific rattling and clattering that drowned out the roar of the propeller, but soon the plane leaped into the air and soared off. I looked down from the copilot's seat to make sure that our skis had not been injured or lost on the icy ground below us. But no harm had been done. The runners were in place. When we landed there was the same alarming din but all was well. I thanked Schneider for having accompanied me and began to load my plane in preparation for its flight to the sub-Arctic.

I had to take a good deal more freight than ordinarily is carried by a pilot, as well as a passenger, Rolf H. Carl, whom I had hired to go with me as my photographer, for I planned to make a film while in the James Bay region. He had had a good deal of experience in motion-picture photography, but he had never seen the ice and snow of the sub-Arctic, and he was eager for the adventure.

Each of us had his own sack of warm winter clothes. Besides this there were our two large sleeping bags. We took rifles, ammunition, matches and for our "iron rations" we stowed away hardtack provisions which would serve in case of a forced landing in an uninhabited region and might, if used sparingly, keep us alive for three or four weeks.

We removed two comfortable seats which had been

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intended for the use of passengers, in order to give more space for freight. *The Flying Cross* is a multi-purpose Stinson which at short notice can be transformed into an ambulance plane, spacious enough for a patient to be lifted into the cabin and installed in a horizontal position.

We stowed away an oil stove and a drum of kerosene for cooking. We packed bandage material and a first-aid kit. We took a hatchet and axes, as well as a tent that had been specially designed for the protection of the plane's motor. After every landing it was to be thrown over the motor, with its flaps hanging down to the ground, so that the engine might be safe from storm and snow flurries. A heating lamp intended for warming up the motor before each flight was an important item in our equipment. A scoop for shoveling snow and a pick for cutting ice also were stored away. Fishing tackles of various types were thrown in, in case of an emergency landing, and also a small tent. I made it a rule from the very outset to carry ten gallons of gasoline in two small cans with me in the cabin of the plane. On more than one occasion this proved to be invaluable.

We took maps with us too, and last of all we stowed away our valuable photographic and cinematographic apparatus and utensils.

I had to climb over plenty of baggage to get into the pilot's seat. Then I set the motor running and glided toward the starting line, giving half-throttle and then full throttle. With the fully loaded plane the start took longer than it had on our trial flight, and the clat-

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tering and thundering were shattering. I kept the plane to the ground until I had passed the three-fourths marks on the field. Then, having gained a speed of about sixty-five miles, I lifted *The Flying Cross* into the air and we were on our way.

Before reaching Ottawa we ran into a snowstorm, the first of many I was to encounter during my Arctic flying. We detoured toward the north and soon the weather cleared. In front of me the sky was cloudless but the air was squally. The storm buffeted us so badly that I bounced out of my pilot's seat several times, but since the vision was good I did not worry much. For eight years Carl had been flying and had never been airsick until now but I saw that he had a very bad case of it. He was so stricken that I would have tried to land the plane but we were flying over forests and mountains where there were absolutely no landing facilities. Over Lake Timiskaming we struck a bad air pocket which catapulted me out of my seat and banged my head against the ceiling of the plane.

I flew over the harbor of Haileybury and then came down and landed softly on the deep snow that covered the frozen lake. It was my first ski landing and a successful one. The following morning we flew straight north for half an hour and unexpectedly found ourselves caught in a snowstorm that forced us to make an emergency landing. There was no possibility of getting through. To escape the storm I flew toward a frozen lake and landed just in time, for a few minutes later the storm enveloped us completely and was so dense that from my seat I could not even distinguish

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the propeller of my plane, which stood at rest a few feet in front of me. It was a northwest wind. For an hour and a half the snow kept whirling down. Then the sky cleared and was miraculously blue.

I started the motor, allowed it time to warm up, gave gas, half-throttle and full throttle. The plane trembled violently but did not glide forward. It stood rooted to the ground. I made another attempt, after having shut off the gas. But still nothing happened. The runners were stuck so tightly to the snow that no amount of gas at full throttle would pry them loose. They were frozen to the icy surface underneath. Dressed as we were in our heavy pilot furs we went to work with pick and shovel and soon we were enveloped in clouds of steam. We took our hatchets and cut a few young trees in the near-by forest, then we laid short pieces under the runners, which by that time had been cleared of snow and ice. I tried once more. The plane made a short leap forward, just far enough to get clear of its underpinnings of wood. Then it bowed gently forward and was stuck once more. We used our snowshoes and cut more trees for support pieces. I felt like a regular lumberjack. Carl went behind to shove, while I gave gas and full throttle, but his efforts were unavailing. I walked back to where he was, and saw that part of his face was frozen from having stood in the icy wind created by the propeller. I washed his face with snow and rubbed the white spots on his cheeks until the blood began to course through them again. My final proposal was that he should climb into the pilot's seat and give gas, half-throttle and full throttle,

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although he knew nothing about piloting, while I applied my greater weight to shoving the plane from behind.

Our efforts this time were successful. The plane began to move. Carl gave full gas and the plane glided, not only over our improvised path, but beyond it over the surface of the snow. I was completely breathless when I jumped onto the gliding runners. I had to unbuckle my snowshoes while climbing over them. While Carl kept the plane moving straight ahead I clambered into the cabin and took over the gas lever, nosing the plane into the wind.

After half an hour's flying time we ran into another snowstorm and Carl became airsick once more. I detoured in a westerly direction to escape the buffeting. But soon the entire horizon disappeared in front of me. Nothing but snowstorms all around! I realized that it would be impossible to reach Moosonee before darkness, so I aimed for the small airport of South Porcupine, to wait there till next day.

The reception which I received from the pilots and mechanics of this port was hearty. Duke Schiller introduced himself as the pilot who had found the ocean flyers Fitzmaurice, Koehl and von Huenefeld after their forced landing on Greenley Island. I told Schiller of my initial experiences with snow-flying and he gave me advice which was to be valuable to me in the future. Early the next morning I went to the little church of South Porcupine to say Mass. The parish priest received me cordially and asked me to give Holy Communion to the faithful during my Mass. Later he and

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a government official accompanied me to the starting place. It was very cold. Since South Porcupine is situated at an altitude of more than a thousand feet, and since the air is thinner here than at sea level, we had a long start. The weather was fine and the visibility excellent. Before we reached the southern tip of James Bay I saw below our plane a trail of smoke from a train that had stopped on a long bridge about thirty miles south of Moosonee. Here is a Toonerville local giving me my directions, I thought.

I decided not to use the frozen river for a landing place and therefore turned north from a height of three thousand feet. I had spiraled down, having shut off the engine, suspecting nothing wrong, but keeping a close lookout toward the ground. The motor spit a few times and then went on strike. The propeller was still turning, but very slowly. Then I saw it standing still. The plane was coasting. I steered directly toward the frozen river, for I had no intention of alighting on the tops of the trees. While sailing down, I pressed on my starter as hard as I could. When I had reached a point over the river where landing was possible and had fully resigned myself to the emergency landing, the motor suddenly started again. I changed my mind and flew straight ahead over the river to warm up the motor and relieve it of the strain which would be entailed in any attempt to gain altitude. Soon the engine behaved normally once more and we landed smoothly at Moosonee.

I learned one lesson on this occasion—that when coasting to a lower altitude in very cold weather the

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pilot must not shut off his motor, or it will freeze in the air as he coasts. Moreover, when landing in the Arctic snow he cannot simply shut off his motor, pull off his double pair of gloves and ask for a hot drink. He or his mechanic must be ready to jump from the plane before it comes to a standstill and shove under its runners at least six pieces of wood which he has carried along in the plane. On these blocks the skis are lifted a little above the snow, so that the air passes between them and the snow.

The first thing a pilot must do, even when preparing for an everyday winter flight in Northern Canada, is to take a blowtorch with an open flame and go with it under the motor, which is draped with the tent that hangs down to the snow. Before beginning to heat up the motor, he puts a fire extinguisher at his side, which must also be heated and thawed out from its frozen state. The oil must be heated too. If, after one- or two-hours' effort, with the thermometer reading thirty below, the motor at last starts chugging, he breathes a sigh of relief. If the motor still is silent the heating operation is continued. When I do this I always have the feeling that the plane and everything about it is all set for a crash and an explosion. The first time that I had a mishap in a plane was in the spring of 1936, when I was flying Vice-Provincial Father Henri Belleau (now Bishop of James Bay) to Fort Albany for the feast day of the Oblate Order—February 17. A special religious celebration had been planned for the evening and twelve Grey Nuns and a hundred Indian children had come to witness the cere-



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mony. My mechanic, Brother Beaudoin, and I took off in glorious weather. The country stretched below us in great white silence—nothing but snow and ice. But the sun softened the snow that day and when the time came to return with Father Belleau the plane was too heavy and I could not hold it up for the take-off. I drew off twenty gallons of gasoline, then made a second attempt and managed to get it off the ground. All went well until we approached the mission of Fort Albany. A haze had begun to cloud the sun late in the afternoon and the landscape took on the appearance of milk soup. No longer could I see the surface of the snow, nor could I judge the irregularities caused by snowdrifts. Everything was a soft white haze. I thought I might be able to judge the height of my plane above the surface of the snow if I landed directly in front of the mission, but even here I found I could not fix my altitude. Three times I circled above the mission station, wishing that someone would spread some dark blankets on the snow to guide me.

I flew three miles back of the mission, where fir trees flanked the river on either shore. I had never landed there before but I assumed that the snow must begin at the lower end of the fir trees. This was a serious miscalculation on my part. Actually the snow began thirty feet farther away. I pulled the throttle, lost altitude, came down to the level of the trees and lower still, but the runners of my plane did not touch the snow. We seemed to be descending into bottomless subterranean levels when all at once I felt the snow beneath me, but it was already too late for my quick

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maneuvering. The plane had crashed. Its left ski had gone into a snowdrift, the plane itself had swung around in a semicircle and come to a stop. The left landing gear and the left ski were broken. "Too bad," I said, climbing out to examine the damage. Things might have been worse. None of the passengers was hurt or even bumped. It was my second crash over a period of twenty years and during the five weeks that followed, while Brother Beaudoin went to Detroit and Montreal for a reserve landing gear and propeller, I had time to meditate on my shortcomings as an air pilot.

At first I felt the cold most acutely on these flights. My pilot's fur coat and my otter cap served me well, but I had trouble with my hands. I had to take off my caribou gloves in managing the metal crank which controls the stabilizer, for the crank could be moved only with difficulty when the lubricating oil was frozen. While suffering from the terrific heat in Africa during my flying service there, I frequently dreamed of the Arctic as I suffered torture from thirst. But when I got to the Arctic I found it easy to dwell on the heat of Africa.

Flying is much the same in the Arctic as anywhere else, except for certain precautions that have to be taken. The first rule is: Don't fly into a snowstorm—in preference try a landing anywhere. And one must guard zealously against snow blindness. Once, when I was flying from Moosonee to the mission of Fort Albany, I became snow-blind. I was inexperienced then in flying over snow and ice and against the sun. The

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altitude meter showed me that I was three thousand feet high. The sun was in front of me and the scenery seemed magnificent. The plane was on skis and I was taking some material to the mission.

Suddenly I was conscious of pain in my eyes. I rubbed them and then I looked in the cockpit to check my course, altitude, the temperature of the oil and the engine, my speed, and so forth, but I could see nothing. It was a shock. I rubbed my eyes desperately. The pain in them was acute. I looked outside the airplane but could see nothing, although the sun had been shining brightly a few moments earlier. The last time I had been able to look at the instruments I was doing one hundred and twenty-five miles cruising speed. I knew I had the plane balanced at three thousand feet, which meant that I would not climb any more.

After saying a prayer, I took my hands and feet off the controls, closed my eyes, protected them with both my hands and entrusted my life to my Stinson Reliant. For the next five, or perhaps ten minutes, I scarcely knew what was happening. At last I uncovered my eyes and tried to see. Still blind! I could hear the engine running smoothly. Her revolutions sounded right. The ears of a pilot are well attuned to this particular music.

I rested my eyes some more, and then again I uncovered them. At last I could see the landscape below—not clearly, but enough. I could not read my instruments at all, but I knew that I was not much off my course. I kept my eyes protected and flew on until I made a safe landing at the mission. The Fathers told

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me my eyes were all red and blood-streaked, but I did not tell them anything about my experience then. From that time on, I never forgot to take my snow goggles with me on a flight.

I use three different pairs for winter flying in the Arctic. When I face the sun, and its blinding reflection from the snow makes my eyes smart, I reach for the darkest pair, which are fitted with heavily shaded glass. With the sun behind me and its rays strong and bright, I use a moderately colored pair. Lightly tinted glasses serve me when the sunlight is weak. With these three types of glasses I am ready for all situations. But in this, as in other respects, we are pampered and spoiled compared with the Eskimo. He generally has very good eyes and sees my airplane before he can hear it. But he, too, suffers great distress when dazzling sunlight illumines his world of ice and snow. Then he has recourse to snow spectacles but they are not imports from Leitz or Zeiss. They are homemade—whittled by himself from a small piece of driftwood, four or five inches long and about an inch thick, and hollowed out on one side in the shape of a small boat. He makes two narrow slits in the bottom, through which only small gleams of sunlight reach his eyes. If he becomes snow-blind—as he sometimes does in spite of this precaution—then he resorts to a very simple remedy and washes his eyes with mothers' milk.

It is an iron rule of the Canadian Air Ministry that food provisions must be carried by every Arctic flyer—also firearms, matches and sleeping bags of the type that can keep their owners warm at fifty degrees below

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zero, if necessary. These precautions must be taken in case of forced landings. I know one pilot who carried food sufficient for eight days but after a forced landing he had to wait six weeks before being found.

I ran into a severe snowstorm myself on one occasion while piloting my plane in the region of Rupert's house, the oldest trading post of the Hudson Bay Company, situated near the meeting point of James and Hudson Bays. The storm had a velocity of fifty or sixty miles an hour and was quite impressive. I had Father Belleau and Brother Beaudoin with me, and we turned and flew back to the Hudson Bay Post, where we were welcomed and treated as guests by Mr. Watt, a company official. We told him of the approaching snowstorm and he helped us to anchor the airplane to the ground. Ropes were fastened to the tip of each wing. We tied pieces of firewood at the loose ends. Then we cut holes in the ice, dropped the ropes into the holes and filled them with water. In a few seconds the water was ice. The whole operation was repeated for the tail of the airplane. Finally the motor was covered with a tent especially designed for that purpose. At last we were ready for the snowstorm. The plane had been anchored so that it faced the blast.

Our precautions stood the test. The plane was completely covered with snow, but was not damaged. And we fared sumptuously on tea, fresh bread and ham around Mr. Watt's stove. The more fiercely the storm howled outside, the more satisfied we felt to be indoors. Now and then we looked through the window-

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panes to make sure that our ghostly airplane stayed with us.

On my first flight into the Arctic my plane was fitted with a magnetic compass. It was a very good one, costing \$200, but I found it useless because of our proximity to the magnetic pole. The gyrocompass would have served the purpose better. When my compass failed to function, I had to get my bearings from the sun. However, this was unsatisfactory, as the sun moved a little every day and all available maps were inaccurate. I flew by my watch, therefore, and checked my navigation by the sun. I am quite able, of course, to distinguish between islands and the continent, between rivers and the ocean, and between mountains of rock and floating mountains of ice. I have never made a serious error in calculating my general direction, and although I have flown a few miles out of my way, I have always been able to correct the mistake while drawing nearer to my goal. But with the steel compass one always has a sense of security. Sudden changes in the weather do not worry one at all. I simply fly low with the nose of my plane pointed in the direction of the compass—knowing that if I follow it faithfully I will never miss my goal. This is not a magnetic compass, nor is it based on the principle of the gyroscope. It consists simply of the steel tracks of a railroad. When a pilot finds himself in a quandary, with his magnetic compass jumping back and forth like a dog in a cage, and even his gyrocompass playing false, he clings to the gleaming rails—an excellent compass and a safe guide! It will be a long time before

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any railroad opens up the Arctic, but it would be a godsend to an Arctic air pilot to have one to follow in bad weather.

Although the weather is always the dominant factor in regulating flying conditions, sometimes the human element throws one's calculations astray. A distress call received at the mission in Moosonee almost cost me my life and those of my four passengers. On this occasion I was asked to transport two Sisters from the railway terminus to their mission home, where they were badly needed to help in the hospital and to conduct a school. They could make the journey by plane in about two hours; by boat it would take them at least three days and nights. The previous summer their Mother Superior had had an unpleasant attack of seasickness aboard the mission steamer. The two Sisters were quite apprehensive about repeating this experience, so they were relieved when they learned they were going to fly with me.

An hour before the take-off they were in the plane chatting brightly. "Is everything ready?" I asked at last. The answer came back from my four passengers—a priest, my mechanic and the two Sisters: "Yes, everything's ready."

I fed the engine gas and stepped on the accelerator. Soon the plane was skimming at a mile a minute over the water. Suddenly a cold sweat broke out on my forehead. I knew that something was wrong alongside my feet at the lateral controls. But what it was I couldn't imagine. I had to keep my eyes focused straight ahead to see where I was going, for the plane was pick-

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ing up speed every moment and was responding proportionately to every shift of my steering gear.

There it was again—something unnatural that moved between my feet on the floor of the plane. Looking straight ahead to avoid the slightest deviation and a possible somersault into the water, I reached down unflinchingly, without knowing what my hand would touch. I felt something warm and alive, caught it in an iron grip, yanked it up and flung it over my head into the cabin.

It proved to be a handful of cat's fur. Now, ever since my boyhood, when I was painfully scratched by a kitten, I have held a grudge against the species.

"Oh, oh, the kittens!" cried the two Sisters in unison.

At that critical moment the plane rose from the water and I veered around in a circle by way of farewell to the mission station. Realizing that I had survived a somewhat critical encounter with a kitten, I smiled and made light of the incident. But secretly I named the good Sister who had brought it on, *Imprudencia*.

It developed that she and her companion had carried the kittens on board in their hand luggage. They had packed them in a box but before we took off they had let them out, to wander at will around the cabin. The kittens were destined for a sick child at the hospital.



# 16

## OVER THE AIR WAVES

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**D**URING one of my visits to Montreal in the summer of 1936 I found Father Gilles Marchand, formerly rector of the Catholic University of Ottawa and now Provincial of the French Canadian Oblates, quite troubled by the fact that the almost insurmountable difficulties of boat and dog sled travel made it impossible for him to visit all his missions as often as he desired.

"I envy you, Father Schulte," he told me. "Imagine! It has been more than sixteen years since the last Provincial visited the missions on James Bay. Yet you, with your airplane, could cover them all in a few days."

I volunteered at once to take him the round of the missions. I estimated that it would be about four thou-

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sand flying miles and that we could complete the circuit in ten days. Father Marchand was eager, but he had one deep worry. His mother was dangerously ill. She might linger for months; on the other hand, at her age, the end might come at any moment. He was one of seven sons—the only priest—and he felt that his place was at her bedside. But he agreed to go when I pointed out that my plane was equipped with wireless and that he could be reached quite easily if there were any change in her condition.

We started off with ideal flying weather. The skies were cloudless, the winds were favorable, and within a week we had visited all the missions, even in the most outlying districts, and were back in Moosonee. In seven days we had covered more than four thousand miles and had seen the mission priests and their work.

Moosonee is indelibly impressed on my memory. In less than two minutes after our arrival the plane, its cabin and both of us were literally covered with mosquitoes. They were invincible air raiders. It happens that there are numerous swamps all around James Bay and when the ice thaws in summer, millions of mosquitoes make this region their hunting ground.

Suddenly the radio began to speak, over the dark forests and lakes of Canada: "Montreal calling Father Marchand . . . an urgent message for Father Marchand . . . his mother is dying. . . . Montreal calling. . . ."

We started for Montreal at a speed of more than one hundred and thirty miles an hour. The wings of the airplane were racing the wings of death. Father

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Marchand arrived in time to spend two days with his dying mother. It was the last and one of the greatest of her earthly consolations.

Thus was proof once more given of the great service which wireless performs for the missionaries in Arctic service.

“. . . Calling CY 5 M—Hello—CY 5 M—Moosonee! Do you hear CY 5 P Beacon Point? We are calling from Beacon Point. We made twenty-five miles today, and we are camping now in frozen James Bay just beyond Beacon Point. All is well. . . .”

This was the first wireless call ever sent out in the territory of James Bay and CY 5 P was a small transportable short-wave station that was being carried on an ice tractor in March, 1938. On the following day a similar call was sent out from near Halfway Point. On the third day it came from No Man's Land. And on the fourth day the station could at last send word to the Superior of the mission at Moosonee that the ice tractor had arrived safely at Fort Albany.

One month later the Oblate Fathers were operating three short-wave sending and receiving stations in the mission territory around James Bay. Since they are not trained radio-technicians the instruments had to be built in such a way that their operation offered no special difficulties. The large transmitters are run on alternating current. It was a difficult and expensive business to supply suitable generators adapted for gasoline engines. Electrical power cannot be bought in

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these regions where utility companies are nonexistent. Most of the gasoline motor generators which were offered to us at attractive prices could not adjust themselves to the changes in the oscillations which occur during the operation of a transmitter. We, therefore, had to buy larger and specially built engines, the cost of which nearly equalled the cost of the short-wave transmitters.

It must be remembered, of course, that gasoline is very expensive in Northern Canada and that the steamer which visits the scattered settlements once each summer occasionally fails to get through, because of adverse ice conditions. The only safe way, therefore, of providing power seems to be through accumulators which can be charged by windmill generators. The ideal situation would be, of course, to have gasoline generators available for use in case of emergency.

During the summer of 1937 the *M. F. Therese* carried a 400-watt short-wave transmitter and managed not only to send the usual navigation news but also to investigate radio conditions and possibilities along the shores of Hudson Bay. The advantages that wireless telegraphy brings to a country in which human settlements are situated many days apart by dog sled are all too obvious. It is startling to hear the gurgling voices of the Indians as the school children of Fort Albany communicate with their parents through this modern vehicle. When our short-wave station introduced a new branch of modern technical science into the wilderness of Northern Canada, it brought in-

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terest and stimulation to the natives of the icy regions of the Arctic.

While in New York in 1937, I received a telegram from an amateur station in New Jersey, ordering spare parts for the wireless station of the *M. F. Therese*. At the time, the ship was sailing north along the coast of Labrador, and was nearing Hudson Strait. The message almost knocked me speechless. What story lay behind it? To find out I telephoned that afternoon to the amateur radio operator, E. P. Chase, Jr., of Teaneck, New Jersey. When I finally got him he said: "Father Schulte, I am bedridden. While studying forestry I fell ill, two years ago, and have been in bed most of the time ever since. It is hard for me to get to the telephone. My room is upstairs and our telephone is in mother's room on the first floor."

That afternoon my car stopped in front of his home. In the rear was a large antenna, part of young Chase's amateur station W<sub>2</sub>KAK. His amiable mother welcomed me at the door. Knowing that I was a Catholic priest, she said: "We are not Catholics, but we have heard about you and think that you are doing a wonderful work, on which we wish God's blessing." Upstairs my young friend lay in bed, with the amateur radio station which his father had built to banish loneliness, close beside him. We greeted each other heartily, shook hands, and became firm friends. He told me that he had caught the message of the *M. F. Therese* by mere chance. She had sent out the call letter CQ, indicating that she simply wished to talk to somebody. She was near the northern tip of Labrador on her way with provisions for

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the mission stations in the Arctic. When he answered, she radioed back:

“Hello, New Jersey, Hello! Will you do us a favor? Father Schulte, the Flying Priest, is in New York. Please send him this telegram: We want the following spare parts for our radio.”

Then came the itemized list and greetings. He sent me the message promptly, and was delighted to have me run over without delay to thank him. “You see, Father,” he said, “I am still young and anxious to work and to study. I intended to become a state forester, but I have kidney trouble, and have been in bed for two years. My father has built this radio station to keep my mind busy. Mother still hopes that I shall get well. I feel, however, that I am good for nothing. It is hard to see my friends and schoolmates working so earnestly, while I am useless.”

“Look here, you are not at all useless,” I assured him. “You are so capable and efficient that I would like to send you a radio message from the Arctic every day that I shall be there. Then you can pass it on to my friends.”

“Have you really that much confidence in me? Do you believe that I can handle such a commission?”

“Yes,” I said, “I trust you, and I am so sure you can do it that I’m going to leave it entirely to you.”

The tears came into his eyes. He had never expected anything like that. “Father Schulte,” he said, “it is just about time to call the *M. F. Therese*. I’ll try right now to get her.”

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Slipping on his earphones he turned a switch. Immediately the music started—ta-ta-te-ta, ta-ta-te-ta. A few moments later he called out triumphantly: "I have the connection."

After the ship had thanked him, he and I chatted with our friends on the little icebreaker on the far northern seas. I told them I would catch up with them in a few days to guide them through the ice fields.

The young man proved to be not only a good friend but also an expert radio amateur. I was in touch with him every day, for the Arctic and New York are not apart a second by wireless. He caught my frequent messages quickly and relayed them promptly. He also gave us the news. One item was that in New York more than a hundred persons had died of the heat in one month. Just then, we told him, we were wearing our heavy furs in the Arctic. All the members of our northern expedition got to know young Chase. The following summer he answered our call only once. Thereafter W<sub>2</sub>KAK remained silent.

The *M. F. Therese* tried for a week to make connections—but in vain. Then a CQ to New York was answered by another New Jersey amateur. We asked him to find out how things stood with young Chase, for we were worried. Our anxiety was well founded. His illness had taken a turn for the worse, and he was dead. Up in the Arctic we all prayed for our young friend and for his sorrowing parents.

# 17

## SNOW AND ICE

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IT WAS magnificent in my youth to go on sleighing parties, jingling through the familiar tall forests. But it was something else to go sleighing over the frozen face of Hudson Bay, where the snow dunes and tumbled masses of ice make one think of a storm-tossed sea whose surging billows all have congealed. Bishop Turquetil once described it as "an immeasurable and limitless desert of snow which has been stirred up into mighty waves by the play of wind and storm, and then suddenly has been stilled and stiffened by frost."

The ocean's ice crust usually measures from ten to thirteen feet in depth. Its width near Chesterfield Inlet is from ten to twelve miles. In this neighborhood the coast line receives a vast deposit of ice floes which are driven in by storm and tide, and dumped helter-skelter



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until they resemble an extended field of ruins. It is so difficult to gauge where the exact boundary line between land and sea lies in this confusion that occasionally Eskimos have built their snowhouses far beyond the shore. When the ice broke suddenly in the summer a few of them drifted off on ice floes. Much of the small drift ice keeps packing along the coast; more of it is washed ashore, where it occasionally melts during August.

One rarely finds a smooth stretch of ice anywhere. Now and then large blocks have to be hurdled. The path leads up and down over uneven surfaces, and occasionally over ice floes which have been piled in high heaps. On two different occasions I was catapulted from my sledge in such bad spills that I had severe backaches for a week. There and then I decided that a light airplane smashup in the Arctic might easily be more tolerable than a spill from a dog sled. The dogs, of course, are remarkably strong and run with all their might, especially when they know they are going home. All goes well so long as they are running on snow. But when they get on a stretch of ice, with the surface as smooth as a mirror and they are running at top speed, the sledge flies to the right, then to the left, and next, while the dogs lunge ahead, it turns completely upside down, forcing one to make quick adjustments for an involuntary emergency landing. After one of those spills I said jestingly to my missionary companion: "I believe it might be well for me to buckle on a parachute before riding again in one of those dog sleds."

Pampered and spoiled as we are by civilization, we

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think nothing of the fact that we can have light whenever we need it. By day we have the sun and at night more lamps than we can use. But the unselfish people who have gone into the darkness of the Arctic night for supernatural reasons are denied even the simplest necessities of life. All those over whom the Arctic night has drawn its shadow—whether missionaries, other white men, or Eskimos—long intensely for the sun. And when the first feeble rays begin to pierce the Arctic night, they are ready to kneel down and praise God for its light and warmth.

During the summer months, however, the sun never sets day or night, thus compensating for its winter absence. It remains above the horizon uninterruptedly, coursing around it in all directions, keeping constantly in sight for as many weeks and months as it remained hidden during the winter.

My first experience of the midnight sun gave me a curious sensation. I had no desire to crawl into my sleeping bag, for I did not feel that bedtime had arrived, even though it was midnight. Everything was bright and clear. Since I had just completed a long flight, the superior of the mission politely asked me not to stay up but to seek rest, for it was past midnight. I agreed and we slept like groundhogs.

The midnight sun is a welcome aid when a mission station is being built. If the missionary wishes he may work continuously for a couple of months, and he always can count on the finest light. That seems a long shift. It is doubtful if the workmen of our moderate climates would ever become reconciled to it. The mid-

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night sun is also advantageous for flying, except when bad weather interferes with our calculations. Even in these months of unfailing sunlight there may be storms severe enough to blot out both sun and sky. When a fog also makes its appearance, even a hand held before the eyes is not visible. At one of the lonely mission stations which I reached during the season of the midnight sun, I found a missionary whose watch was broken. He had no compass, and consequently had lost track of the time. He had calculated his days by the sun, but had to be set right, for his deductions were out by two hours. He did not know exactly where due north lay, and had taken his bearings by rule of thumb.

Gradually I became familiar with the ways of the mission Fathers as they coped with conditions around them, and one by one the natural phenomena of the Arctic unfolded before my eyes. When for the first time in my life I gazed on icebergs, they suggested to me fantasies from another world. No two of them looked alike and some of the smaller ones were like birds poised for flight. Others resembled airplanes. The really large ones commanded respect, since at any moment they might split open with a roar like thunder and create a gigantic whirlpool. When parts break away and slip into the sea they are said to be "calving," and the rumbling music of this event is unforgettable. The broken-off parts of the glaciers start drifting southward as floating icebergs, and stray specimens occasionally get half way to the equator, disturbing the sleep of captain, crew and passengers on ocean liners. Upon

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occasion they have smashed even the most powerful icebreakers. It is fortunate that they do not put in an appearance without advance notice. When the temperature drops suddenly, the air turns damp and thick, and impenetrable fogs appear, then every captain knows that he should proceed slowly. Bishop Turquetil told me that in traveling on an icebreaker he was unable to cover more than three miles some days. On one occasion the *Nascopie* spent a whole day trying to push through bergs and packed ice, but at night she lay precisely where she had been in the morning.

Of course, when an icebreaker like the *Nascopie* gets into the drift ice she is not helpless, for she has been built to meet this situation. With full steam up she pushes into the ice. Her bow is so constructed that she slides up on it, and by her weight as well as her power, she breaks through. Groaning and roaring, the ice crashes, is momentarily submerged, and then rears up on either side of the ship in piles as high as a house. The icebreaker trembles and shakes all over, tosses and rolls from side to side, but still pushes ahead. Small ships which stray into drift ice are apt to be hopelessly trapped, however. They cannot break the Arctic drift ice and, not infrequently, such boats have been smashed and crushed like flimsy matchboxes—a sad fate for the unlucky Arctic pioneers who man them. I have seen ships caught in drift ice and in great distress, and on more than one occasion I have been able to guide them out of danger with my plane—like the time I brought it right down on the drift ice but had trouble getting away again.

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Often I have flown for hours at a time with nothing but drift ice visible beneath me. My first meeting with these fields of ice was where James Bay opens into Hudson Bay. For several days I had been annoyed by a heavy fog through which it seemed better not to fly. I had to wait and be patient. Finally a strong west wind blew away the fog. Then I found myself face to face with a new predicament—a limitless area of drift ice. Since then I have flown over the drifting ice fields at the northern tip of Hudson Bay, west of Southampton Island, at Repulse Bay, Frozen Strait, Foxe Basin, Committee Bay, and faraway Arctic Bay, five hundred miles north of the Arctic circle. And whenever I have had to fly under unfavorable weather conditions for hours at a stretch over these areas of packed or drifting ice, whether alone, with my mechanic, or with a patient who had to be conveyed to a hospital, I have felt cold perspiration on my forehead and have had the impulse to caress my motor tenderly, for if it stalled, or I had been compelled to make a forced landing, certainly no one would have come to rescue me.

The ice fields often are fifty, sixty or a hundred miles long. Some are smaller. Individual cakes of ice are from three to twelve feet thick, and of about the same length. Large floes sometimes are seen among the small pieces. When the ocean currents carry an ice field into some narrow pass, such as Frozen Strait, or the tides wash the ice ashore, the huge lumps pile up in unbelievable confusion. It seems as if some dismal, invisible power were constantly pushing more and more ice into the weltering chaos.

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These disastrous fields of drift ice are not formed on land, like the icebergs. They are merely frozen ocean water. Along the shores of Hudson Bay and of the Polar Sea, the shallow water freezes when the tide runs out and when it returns a second layer of ice is formed. The snow falls and mingles with the freezing water. Storms and flood tides carry floes in from the sea, and drive them up on the coastal ice. Their incredible momentum creates a wilderness of ice, gruesome and fantastic in appearance. These huge mounds of packed ice are much feared by Arctic travelers. In the summer months, at the time of the breakup, the packed ice is detached from the land. Its area is tremendous, for in winter the sea is frozen for ten or fifteen miles off shore, while the small bays and inlets, of course, are frozen solidly. With the breakup the north wind starts the ice drifts moving south. Before long, however, the wind may shift and blow from the south, or even in quick succession, from all four points of the compass. The ice rides before the winds like a battering ram. When it twists and turns no shore is safe. The coast line on which drift ice drives and piles up always has a wildly jumbled and desolate aspect.

But no phenomenon of the Arctic Region to me was more electrifying than the Northern Lights. I have often stood in Times Square and studied its electrical advertising display. I have also flown over it at midnight and have admired the spectacle created by millions of lights in a city of seven million souls. The blazing sheaves sprayed up from Times Square are fascinating and

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exciting. But they are mere shadows when compared with the masterful symphony of color found in the Northern Lights. The whole sky seems to wave in rippling motions until observers sometimes fancy that they hear sound accompaniments, although scientists insist that this is an illusion. The real nature of the Northern Lights has never been fully explained but nowhere in nature can one match the dramatic and elusive color tints that flood the Arctic heavens. Many times I fancied I saw gigantic fiery serpents darting across the sky, coming straight at me and disappearing. Then a bright glare would spread on the horizon to the northwest—small at first but quickly growing and expanding until the whole sky was bathed in light. Finally it would break into drifting columns, like ghost-rider troops rushing northeast.

One February night in 1937 I stood for a long time on a small wooden bridge, although the temperature was forty degrees below zero. One of our Fathers, who had watched the same spectacle from another spot, told me next morning that although he had been in the North for seventeen years, he had never seen the Northern Lights so beautiful as that night. For the time being I was glad to be alone to take it all in. Never in my life shall I forget that glorious celestial display, and I thought how great must be the artist who conjured up that pageant of light and color in an Arctic sky! I was glad that all this glory was free and accessible to the poorest people in the world.

I was meditating along these lines when I heard a crack, like the shot of a rifle. Because of the terrific

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cold a large nail in the wooden bridge had reduced volume and lost its grip on the plank board, which sprang out of place. This quickly recalled me to the prosaic and chilly reality of my surroundings. I rubbed my cheeks and nose to prevent freezing, shook myself till I was warm, for I was dressed in my pilot's outfit, and went into the mission station. There I said my prayers, fell asleep and dreamed about the Northern Lights and the Perpetual Light of the hereafter.

Some of the thoughts that came to me in these chilly surroundings I later put into a letter to my mother:

"My dear good Mother:

"Your last letter, because of its promise of your prayers, has brought me great consolation. I had written you that I was going through a hard trial. I now thank you for your special prayers for me.

"You ask me what has been asked, no doubt, by every mother who has a son laboring here in the Far North as an Oblate Priest and missionary: 'How can you stand the strain? Whence do you get your strength?'

"The test of suffering is indeed a test in which many fall short. We naturally hate suffering; but it is not right for us to do so. For if we love God truly and unselfishly we must be willing to prove the worth of our love by our readiness to suffer for Him. He has borne for us sufferings a million times greater than any we can suffer. Since we are sure of this, why should we not be ready at least to prove our good will?



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“To suffer with lethargic indifference is unworthy of man; to endure sorrows and pain with fatalistic cynicism, fails to satisfy. But as truly as Christ, the son of God, has died for us upon the Cross, and has saved all the world by his suffering and death, so truly must also our sufferings, if they are endured for love, have a deep significance. We do not always see this, especially not when we feel ourselves fastened to the Cross. Even the Savior in his death agony upon the Cross called out: ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!’

“The significance of our Savior’s suffering and death was the redemption of the world. The significance of our suffering and death, endured for God’s sake, is that we thereby make reparation for our sins and win Divine graces for ourselves and for others. God himself will remove the crown of thorns from our heads and replace it with a crown of glory in heaven. There we shall clearly see that what made us especially dear to God was the suffering which we endured for love of Him. The love which can make the greatest sacrifices is the most unselfish—and unselfish love conquers the heart of God.

“The cross, my Oblate crucifix, accompanies me on all my flights. If I should die here in the Far North I shall die with this cross near. I shall die for the love of my God.

“I am asking that my Oblate cross and the propeller of my airplane be placed on my grave.

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"During flights which are hard and difficult, I take the cross and press it against my heart, and if my hands are prevented from clasping the cross, my eyes and thoughts clasp it and together with it, Him who was nailed to the Cross and who bled out of a thousand wounds for love of me.

"I look upon the Savior's right hand and see it pierced by a nail. I look upon my own right hand and see it covered with a warm glove which protects it against the cold. I move my fingers and feel that my hand is unharmed, free of all pain, and fully able to manipulate the plane's controls.

"I look upon the left hand of the Savior. A cruel nail has been driven through it. I see thick drops of blood trickling from the wound. Then I look upon my own left hand. Everything here is in order, and the hand likewise has a firm hold on the plane's steering gear.

"The feet of the Savior are transfixed by an overlarge and merciless nail and a stream of blood reddens the wood of the Cross. My feet are a little cold. But that is all. I have heat in my airplane. I wear fur boots, and feel quite comfortable. Perhaps I feel a little stiff from sitting still, but nothing more.

"The crown of thorns pierces the head of my Redeemer pitilessly in many places. Over my head a warm cap of otter fur has been drawn.

"The wound seen in the Savior's heart lies wide open. A broad lance has been driven through it. This open divine human heart allowed itself to be

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pierced because of its overflowing love for us. My own heart beats just a little bit faster during critical flights; but that is all.

“What things have I accomplished or suffered? They are as nothing compared with the love of the Savior. His terrible death agony on the Cross lasted for three hours. My own moments of terror are measurable in seconds and they are hardly worth recalling.

“The cross, my Oblate crucifix, is my teacher, my manual, which I read. It is my guide, and my model, and a book which lies always open before me.

“He who does not learn to read the Cross as he would read an open book, will never learn to suffer from a motive of love. He will think that readiness to suffer is sheer folly. But suffering is no folly. Suffering is the supreme training school of the soul. It frees us from what is earthly. When suffering is borne in the spirit of self-denial it liberates and frees and breaks the shackles of slavery. The Cross is the only ‘blind-flying’ instrument which guides us safely and joyously through the fog, with which sin and sorrow so often encompass our heart. The Cross of the Savior is a program, and a view of life. It is a philosophy of the highest altruistic love. All other philosophies which see their goal in the selfish ego are shallow and vain and will lead not to love but to hatred.

“Life seems to me worth living only in so far as

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it comes into contact with what is everlasting and divine. All else may indeed be interesting and pleasant. Naught is essential but constant awareness through Holy Faith that I am allied with God, that I am united with Him by love. Even when I was exposed to bitter cold, the warmth of this love ever tingled through my body. Even amid everlasting ice and snow, where nothing else was to be seen, I felt that I was in touch with the Divine and Eternal. I sensed God, in whom all of us 'live, and move, and have our being.'

"Who gave me these thoughts? Who was it that trained me from earliest childhood to bear all sorrows even those that seemed undeserved and unbearable in a supernatural manner and from supernatural motives? Who taught me to look to God for strength and support and not to men?

"You, my dear Mother!

"You taught us, your children, this lesson not only by your words, but still more by your own living example. Such strength and bravery as yours are shown only by souls united to God by supernatural love, souls which submit their own wishes completely to His inscrutable will.

"The hours of sorrow which I was privileged to share with you impressed me more deeply, and brought me closer to God—than anything I have ever read or heard.

"Suffering is a touchstone, dear Mother, especially in the most critical hours of life.

"A philosophy and a religion which can fill our

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hearts with heroic courage, even in the midst of heart-breaking sorrow and anguish, is one that proves its worth and truth. I shall gladly live by it and wholeheartedly work for it.

“Lessons which we have learned within our own family circle are never forgotten.

“Dear Mother:

“You have been my best teacher, even of religion. I am grateful to you for this above all else—especially at this hour. When we were children you took us lovingly on your lap and told us of our dear Savior. When we were grown you taught us a lasting lesson and fixed our hearts steadfastly on God by carrying your heavy crosses with unwavering fidelity. It is *your* example, dear Mother, the remembrance of suffering heroically borne for the love of God, which I took with me into the Arctic.

“And if the loving God should ask of me the greatest sacrifice which I can offer, the sacrifice of my life—what then?

“My first thought will be of you, dear Mother, in prayerful remembrance. God will console you with the hope that we shall meet again in heaven. I shall be received into heaven because I could offer no greater sacrifice for God and men than the sacrifice of my life. And you will be received into heaven because you are my saintly Mother. And in heaven no one will ever separate us again.

“I shall fall as a leaf falls from a tree.

“When a leaf thus falls it still remains of some

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use. It mingles and blends with other fallen leaves and with the earth. It changes into good fruitful soil which in turn stimulates and sustains the life of new flowers, and leaves, and trees.

“In like manner if I give my life obediently to the great task of *The Flying Cross* over the Arctic which the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, placed in my hands, I shall still be serving those who come after me.”

# 18

## UNKNOWN SOLDIERS OF THE ARCTIC

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WHEN explorers go to the land of Arctic night and midnight sun, their stories are told in heavy news headlines; but of the men in black robes who are there in the service of Christ little is said. Who knows of the priests and Sisters who live in these regions of perpetual ice and snow, of glistening white and everlasting silence? Who speaks of them? They are almost as well acquainted with silence as the ice fields of the Far North. They talk little and write less. Their task is to spend their lives like brave soldiers at their appointed posts, not for the sake of fame or adventure, but for the love of God and of neighbor. They are there because they want to brighten the polar darkness

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with the light of faith and to bring the warmth of God's love to those who have not only been numbed and chilled by Arctic paganism but who, to use an Eskimo expression, have been "frozen to the very heart." They are the men whom Pope Pius IX called "martyrs of Frost and Cold."

When I speak of the Unknown Soldiers of the Arctic I am not speaking of Alaska or of the Mackenzie and Yukon districts. True, unknown soldiers are stationed in these areas too, but the coldest and most difficult territory of the Arctic is the Vicariate Apostolic of Hudson Bay, which is assigned to Bishop Turquetil. It covers 1,600,000 square miles and is bounded to the north by the geographic North Pole; to the east by a line running from the North Pole southward along the eastern shore of Ellesmere Island, Devon Island and Baffin Island; to the west by the one hundred and first degree longitude from the point where it crosses the sixtieth latitude northward to the North Pole; and to the south by the fifty-fifth degree latitude running from the Labrador coast across the northern part of the Province of Quebec to the waters of Hudson Bay. On the mainland west of Hudson Bay the boundary continues along the sixtieth degree latitude, except for a deviation southward along the shore, extending far enough to take in the port of Churchill, See of the Bishop and the northernmost railway terminal of the province of Manitoba.

Thirteen mission stations have been opened in the vicariate, including the northernmost Catholic mission station in the world—that of Arctic Bay, which is



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dedicated to Christ the King. Thirty Unknown Soldiers and five Sisters minister to the Eskimos in these lonely regions, under conditions that well might daunt any but the stoutest spirits. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate have taken up the front line in the Arctic, true to the words which they have chosen as their motto: "To preach the Gospel to the poor He has sent me." They have traveled to the farthest human settlements on the frozen roof of the globe to bring the light of Holy Faith into the spiritual night of the Arctic. The missionary asks and finds his happiness in caring for the members of his flock, in administering the Holy Sacraments, in baptizing them, in teaching them in the mission schools, in training them for their first Confession and first Holy Communion, in blessing their marriage bond, in baptizing their children, in preparing the aged and dying for a happy and holy death, in assisting at their burial, and in praying for the living and the dead.

The Catholic Church sends into the mission fields only such men as are endowed with excellent gifts of the heart, and also first-rate training of the mind. The education which they receive is fundamentally the same as that of the head of any other large diocese. All the Fathers in the Arctic speak at least two languages and most of them know three or four. Bishop Turquetil is fluent in French, English, Eskimo and Indian.

Those who volunteer for duty in the Arctic dedicate themselves to the work for life. Every ten years, however, they are permitted a visit home, with the chance to rebuild their health. They need it, for they literally

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live in a "white hell," and I do not mean hell in the theological sense—a place or state which has indeed a beginning but no end. In that sense it is separation from God, and an unending experience of every sort of evil and misery. He who enters the "white hell" of the Arctic may still be united closely to God, and in this union he will find his greatest consolation amid the three ever-present dangers of that region—the three apocalyptic horsemen whose steeds can crush with their hooves any man who ventures into the frozen wastes—whether from mere curiosity, a thirst for knowledge, or from a desire for unselfish service. They are Cold, Hunger and Loneliness.

Those who are accustomed to the comforts of a good home, to all the amenities of life, to companionship and creature comforts, can scarcely understand what it means to continue working and to stay cheerful when the temperature has dropped to unthinkable levels below zero. I know missionaries who have no stoves in their homes, though exposed to temperatures of from sixty to seventy degrees below zero.

He who has never come near the point of actual starvation does not know what real hunger means. Anyone who is certain of his daily portion of bread, butter, potatoes and fresh vegetables is a millionaire in the eyes of the Arctic people. I know a priest who for three years continued to pray devoutly and fervently: "Give us this day our daily bread." His prayer remained unanswered all that while. Then an airplane appeared, dropping from the clouds. It brought bread to him and to the few who were gathered about him.

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They ate the dry loaves with tears of gratitude in their eyes, while I, whose privilege it was to bring them that bread, felt like weeping with them.

He who has never been completely alone, with nobody to whom he can speak, from whom he can seek comfort, or with whom he can quarrel, can hardly grasp the heavy weight of loneliness that encloses the bare walls of the mission hut. We have our daily papers, our theaters, our motion pictures and our social engagements. We always have somebody near us. Often we are so busily engaged that the ringing of the telephone puts us out of humor. But if one of the Eskimo priests wishes to chat with his nearest neighbor he has to travel two, three or four hundred miles, so large and scattered are their territories. Once every year the *Nascopie* makes its call at Arctic Bay. On its last visit it brought building materials for the erection of a substantial mission house.

These men and women labor for no earthly gain but only to carry out the command of the Savior: *Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* It is for this reason only that the Oblate missionaries—and Bishop Turquetil as the first among them—have gone to the region of everlasting ice and snow to carry out their mission of everlasting love. The Bishop launched the Eskimo missions twenty-eight years ago and is still their guiding spirit. The Harbor Commissioner of Churchill once told an audience at a public banquet that when he met him for the first time, Bishop Turquetil had just returned from a five-hundred-mile trip by dog team to Chesterfield Inlet. His beard that

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day had been so completely frozen that it had looked like a block of ice. But the Bishop had laughed and told amusing stories. The Commissioner, stuttering a little as he told his story, had shrewdly summed up the Bishop's character.

"I-I-I thought," he said, "that this man—who—whose—be-beard is s-so-so badly fro-frozen and who ca-ca-can laugh so ha-ha-heartily, ca-can't be a b-bad fellow."

He had judged the Bishop correctly, for although he has endured unbelievable hardships, Bishop Turquetil has never forgotten how to laugh. How often he has faced the danger of death no one knows but God. He hardly ever mentions these things. Plenty of cares and sorrows weigh him down, even now in his venerable old age, and he might be excused for feeling sad and embittered. But no. He smiles and laughs, and his merriment is contagious. Those who hear him feel like laughing with him too.

What makes the Bishop so cheerful? When Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Friars Minor, found among his novices men who could not laugh heartily at times of recreation he sent them back to their families. He did not want his disciples to spend their energies in sour moroseness but in love of God—an inexhaustible source of joy.

Bishop Turquetil and his coadjutor, Bishop Clabaut, both natives of France, reside at Churchill, on Hudson Bay, although their duties take them far afield. I was continually amazed by the varied accomplishments of these men and the priests who labor with them. Father

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R. Ferron, a Canadian by birth, is virtually the missionaries' last connecting link with civilization, for Churchill is the farthest stop on the railroad, and he is general procurator and handy man for the missions. He can cope with figures like a revenue officer, but his great love is the sea and whenever he gets the chance he goes white whale fishing. All the children of Churchill call him "Uncle."

Father Duplain happened to be in Churchill on my first visit there. He is a captain, who sails ships up to a hundred tons and is expert at piloting vessels through the Arctic pack ice. He was with me when I made my first flight over Frozen Strait, to find a suitable path for the *M. F. Therese*. Usually he wears an immense fur coat and looks like a polar bear. He is a Canadian by birth.

Brother Carnevale used to be chef at the Episcopal residence of Churchill and, being Italian, he was expert at cooking macaroni. When Bishop Turquetil released him from the constraints of permanent kitchen duty and transferred him to the mission of Eskimo Point he had ample opportunity to show his good marksmanship. When I took him walrus hunting in my plane, his efforts were crowned with great success.

Also stationed at Eskimo Point are Father Dionne, a fully seasoned Eskimo missionary, Canadian by birth, who is always welcomed by the igloo dwellers when he makes his long journeys into the hinterland, and Father Dunleavy, of the golden heart, who speaks the Eskimo language with a rich Irish accent and is deeply devoted to the natives.

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I shall always remember my first glimpse of Eskimo Point. It loomed before me as I cleared the deep fog banks which had hidden the barren lands in a misty gray shawl, and came out into the open. In five minutes the roar of my airplane motor brought the Eskimos scurrying from all sides. "*Tingmischuk-uleriyeiksiruar*," they shouted, as I climbed from the plane. "The Father who has wings."

And then I saw Father Dunleavy grinning at me from ear to ear like a schoolboy.

"The top o' the morning to you, Father Schulte," he shouted, and next minute he was gripping my hand.

Father Jim intends to make the entire North not only Catholic but Irish as well. Father Dionne becomes, upon occasion, Father O'Dionne. He has named their dwelling Hibernian Hall. He has the natives humming the "Irish Washerwoman." And he dates his letters according to the number of days either before or after St. Patrick's Day.

After removing the supplies from the plane, we walked up to the house for a chat. There is something intensely boyish about Father Jim, but while he is young in years he has proved himself a most dependable missionary.

"Well, how do you like it?" I asked him.

"I love it—the work, the Eskimos and the life."

"You are not having difficulties at all?"

"Not one. Of course, that last batch of muffins I tried to make, turned out to be a complete flop. Flat muffins are a big hardship in any missionary's life." His blue eyes lit with merriment.

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"Here," I said, offering him a cigarette. "Have a Camel."

He took it and fingered the clean white paper. In that instant I saw a world of contrasts—this boy-priest in thick furs, sitting on a rough stool beside a flickering oil lamp in the northland was a long way from such small amenities as cigarettes.

"There's another bad feature about the North," he went on, puffing clouds of smoke towards the ceiling. "We haven't any butcher shops on street corners."

And then he went on to tell me of the time that he and Father Dionne went out to fetch some caribou that they had cached on a hunting trip. They started out with rifles and packs, wearing sealskin boots that were soft, waterproof and durable, and several pairs of woolen socks. After they had walked for about two hours they encountered hard stinging snow.

"We did not mind this much until we came to knee-deep swamps," Father Dunleavy said. "When we came to hard ground, the skin boots froze to stiff clots and my feet began to blister. After a few hours' rest, during which we had tea, biscuits, canned corn beef and a smoke, we started once again. It was very cold and soon our boots were coated in sheets of ice.

"We walked that day until an hour after darkness, but there was no sign of caribou meat. It was too late to think about returning, so we decided to sleep out that night. We looked for a place with moss but could find none. There was nothing to do but sleep on the frozen ground. We tried to rig a tent out of the canvas that held our supplies. That night we slept exactly

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one hour and a half. We got up the next morning cold and hungry. The lakes had frozen overnight, and it was a relief to walk on them. My feet by this time had become red raw with blisters. We walked for nine hours that day, but still there was no sign of that caribou meat.

"Next day things got worse. It was below zero and I was shaking with chills. Father Dionne built a double bed of moss three feet high. He told me to remove my stockings, which were frozen stiff as boards. After he had wrapped a woolen shirt around my legs, he covered me with two feet of moss. We slept seven hours. Later we made a great fire of moss and lichen, thawed out our clothes, and after tea and biscuits started out again. After walking a few hours, we not only found the caribou, but also a rifle, field glasses and a kit that Father Dionne had lost. We skinned the caribou, wrapped the meat in pelts and hoisted it to our shoulders. Each of us was now carrying more than fifty pounds.

"The return trip was even worse. It turned into a nightmare. About every half hour we lay flat on our backs for a three-minute rest. We crossed lakes, with the ice cracking under us. Night came on but we kept on walking in complete darkness. Altogether we spent thirteen hours walking that day. We were overjoyed when at last we saw the settlement beacon."

I had to leave Father Dunleavy soon after that, and as I dipped my wings in salute over Eskimo Point, the picture of the young priest puffing smoke was still in my mind. In his world now were no luxuries, few comforts, bitter struggle.



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I have many different mental pictures of these men of the North. When I last saw Father Mouchard he was drying fish at the mission of Mistake Bay, which is not far from Walrus Island in Hudson Bay. On that occasion I brought him his mail and he was overjoyed to get it. He was living alone at his mission, but he could laugh as heartily as anybody I have ever heard, with his black eyes flashing and his black beard expressive of his Gallic origin. Life is particularly desolate for the men in the smaller missions. On the other hand, there is always plenty of activity at Chesterfield Inlet, the principal mission station of the Far North, where a hospital as well as a small church has been erected for the Eskimos.

Here Father Ducharme presides as Superior. He is a Canadian who went to Chesterfield as a student of theology and was prepared for Holy Orders by Bishop Turquetil. He speaks the Eskimo language like his mother tongue and is a most gifted missionary. His vicar is Father Didier, a Frenchman, as brave as the early French pioneers and as sweet as a child. I asked him: "What are you, really—a Frenchman or a Canadian?"

"I am an Eskimo," he said, with flashing eyes.

I can still see him carrying the bags of coal which the *M. F. Therese* had brought for Chesterfield. I had my Leica with me and took a snapshot of him. He objected and shook his head in disapproval but the picture was already taken.

Two other young priests function at Chesterfield—Father Toch, a Frenchman, who grew a splendid beard

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in the course of a year and now looks like St. Joseph, and Father Choque, a Belgian, who is the soul of helpfulness around the mission. Both of these priests are still in the difficult early stage of learning the Eskimo language. Working with them are two Oblate lay brothers—Raymond Bedard, and Gilles Paradis, both Canadians by birth. Brother Bedard is a great fisherman and is so full of native wit and humor that he can entertain a monastic community with the greatest ease. Brother Paradis is the mechanic who keeps the lighting and heating systems of the hospital in perfect running order and attends to the outboard motors in summer. Whenever I visit Chesterfield he assists me in filling my tanks.

There are also five Grey Nuns in this busy community. Their mother house is at Nicolet, near Quebec. The local Superior is Sister Frechette, who is like a mother not only to the Sisters, but also to the missionaries and the Eskimos. Sister St. Ignace of Loyola, a graduate nurse, is Dr. Melling's right hand and attends directly to the medical care of the sick, while Sister du St. Esprit and Sister Therese, of the Child Jesus, are in charge of the section of the hospital which is used as an industrial home for destitutes. Sister Fafard, who has charge of the kitchen, is a cousin of Father Eugene Fafard. She is a friendly figure at Chesterfield and cooks with a mother's devotion for the flock she has to feed.

The hospital is immaculately kept. The floors are spotless and the Sisters do not shrink from the meanest kind of labor. Quite frequently their Eskimo patients

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are filthy—dripping with oil and fat and covered with lice. Nevertheless, the Sisters go about the task of bathing them and of providing for their needs with the most gentle mien. They draw their spiritual strength and the courage to do their work from their daily Holy Communions and from their short visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the hospital chapel.

Without the devoted service of these Sisters, who attend lovingly to the smallest details of their work, a hospital in the Arctic would be an impossibility. Under their care the hospital is like a blooming oasis in a bleak desert of snow. They are all Canadians and are used to cold winters, but their stalwart endurance of weather conditions at Chesterfield Inlet would put strong men to shame. It is their love of God which gives them this spirit of fortitude. Nothing else could.

Two Frenchmen run the mission at Baker Lake—Father Rio and Father Philippe. Father Rio is a veteran of the World War. He is a merry fellow, addicted to practical joking, and when I was visiting this station and got ready to retire at night, it was no surprise to find that he had put a cold stone or a cold empty coffee container into my sleeping bag. I would find him lying in his own sleeping bag snoring lustily, but actually squinting at me through slightly opened eyelids.

His companion, Father Philippe, is a Parisian. I call him "Le Petit Parisien," for while he looks bold and mighty with a beard, he seems quite mild without it. He has a musical voice, persuasive and tireless, and his

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conversation goes on with the continuity of a gramophone record.

The mission of Wakeham Bay on Hudson Strait is presided over by Father Fafard, a Canadian with wide experience as an Eskimo missionary, and Father Steinman, a Frenchman, who is receiving excellent training at this station. I first met Father Fafard at the diocesan synod held at Chesterfield Inlet in 1937. At dinner we had pea soup, his favorite dish. If you wish to tease a French-Canadian, simply call him "pea soup," but this made no impression on Father Fafard. He merely asked for another and another plateful.

At the mission of Wolstenholme, along the northernmost tip of Hudson Bay, Father Cartier, an American, works with Father H. Mascaret, a young and zealous Frenchman who is developing into an excellent missionary. Father Cartier was formerly a professor in a seminary in Texas. It was love for the Eskimos which first kindled in him the flame of a religious vocation. His superior assigned him to a teaching post, but he begged to be sent into the heart of the Arctic. He is happy there. In summer he can watch mighty icebergs floating past. He has built his own mission houses. Every nail in them was driven in by his own hands. Of all our missionaries in the field, he has the best command of the English language. When he sailed on the *M. F. Therese* from Chesterfield to Wakeham Bay one summer, it was a pleasure to listen to his radio broadcasts from the ship.

At none of the missions do I feel more at home than at "Our Lady of the Snows" at Repulse Bay, the point

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from which I have taken off for my difficult flights to Igloolik, Pelly Bay, and on one occasion to Arctic Bay. This mission is on the Arctic Circle and the two vigorous Canadians who run it, Father Lacroix and Father Massé, start out regularly every winter on extensive journeys by dog sled. Father Massé has a fine fund of dog stories, based on these and other expeditions. Both men are inured to every sort of hardship. They are beloved by the Eskimos who gather devoutly to worship at the little mission church of "Our Lady of the Snows."

Pelly Bay is the poorest mission station I have ever seen. It lies on the seashore at a point which no mission ship ever has been able to reach. All supplies have to be brought from Repulse Bay, either by dog sled or by airplane. Father Henry, formerly an officer in the French Army, is stationed at Pelly Bay. He lives strictly in Eskimo fashion and frequently journeys by dog sled to faraway King William Island and Boothia Peninsula. Father Van der Velde, his companion at this desolate spot, is a Belgian who acclimated himself to the life of the Eskimo missionary in an unbelievably short time.

Father Bazin, another Frenchman, is stationed at the mission of Igloolik in Foxe Basin. He has lived among the Eskimos for more than ten years and has survived the most trying circumstances. His faithful companion for the last two years has been Father Trebaol, a compatriot who thinks nothing of smothering himself in fur during August, so cold is it at Igloolik.

Father Daniello and Brother Jacques Volant, also

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French by birth, labor at Pond Inlet on Baffin Island. I have never met them, although I have heard their voices over the radio. It was Father Girard, a Canadian by birth, who founded this mission. He entered the Oblate Order as a lay brother and was prepared for Holy Orders by Bishop Turquetil. He is one of the first and best pioneers of the Eskimo missions, universally loved by young and old alike for his cheerfulness and sense of fun. He sees to it that the *M. F. Therese* carries provisions and other necessities of life to the various mission stations once each year.

It was Father Cochard, a Frenchman, who founded the mission "Christ the King" in Arctic Bay during the year 1938. In the winter he had lived in an igloo. In summer, when he was grievously ill and I had to bring him to the hospital at Chesterfield in my airplane, he was living in a small tent. The other casualties of our mission group were Father Kermel, a Frenchman, and Father Thibert, a Canadian, both of whom are now living in Montreal. They are on sick leave and hope to return to continue their mission service at Eskimo Point and Baker Lake. The Eskimos say of both of them that they speak the language better than they do themselves.

My own work in the Arctic is not nearly so meritorious as the labors and sacrifices of these men and women. When I have finished the task of transporting the sick to a hospital, and of carrying mail and provisions to the various mission stations, I fly back again to civilization. My work, although sometimes difficult, is little more than an evidence of good will in com-

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parison with the continuous and never-ending sacrifices made by these men and women.

Brother Beaudoin, my capable and faithful mechanic, belongs to the mission in James Bay. He has been my flying companion ever since I offered my services to the Vicariate of James Bay and Hudson Bay. In 1936 I made a thorough study of northern flying conditions and of the already established air-line routes. The "Canada Air Mail Routes" map issued by the Canadian Government shows where the regular air routes have been established, and where special air communications are lacking throughout a vast missionary territory. More than twenty airways with regular air-mail routes serve the territories of northeastern Quebec, of the south, middle west and far west, and also of the Mackenzie River as far north as Aklavik on the Arctic. But the area of James Bay, Hudson Bay, Northwest Territories, Baffin Island and the other islands to the north were visibly without a single air route line. So it was in this area that I decided to press *The Flying Cross* into service. Thanks to God and my benefactors in the United States, I could supply in three years, from 1936 to 1939, fifteen radio stations, two airplanes, fifteen bases for gasoline as far as eight hundred miles north of the Arctic circle in the Vicariates of James Bay and Hudson Bay, a territory of two million square miles.

# 19

## THE WHITE HELL

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I SHALL never forget the first of my landings at Eskimo Point in 1938. I had visited it as a mail carrier several times during the preceding year. On one of my trips I had as passengers the Bishop and the missionary of the post. On another I had picked up the Eskimo chieftain Alak'ut, the best huntsman of that region and the finest navigator of the dangerous harbor of Eskimo Point. I had flown him to Churchill, where he was to board the *M. F. Therese* which was waiting with a year's provisions for the mission of Eskimo Point. He was to guide her safely into the harbor. I had great fun with him on that occasion. It was his first flight. Many times he had made the journey to Churchill in a dog sled or a sail boat, but he was amazed to find the path through the air so short, for we flew the distance in less than two hours.



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Now on my return I immediately asked for Alak'ut. The Fathers said that he had met with a great sorrow. A few months earlier one of his sons, named Angalik, had frozen to death at a spot only two or three miles away from the mission station. I remembered him as a strong lad, little more than twenty years old. The Fathers told me that he had gone hunting with another companion. They had two sleds. While returning from the chase and when quite close to the mission station, they ran into a blinding snowstorm which continued without letup for three days and nights. The youth got separated from his companion and wanted to rest his dog team for a few moments. In all likelihood he was so exhausted that he fell asleep and froze to death.

"We searched for Angalik three days and three nights," Father Dunleavy told me on this occasion. "The storm was terrific and we did not find the sled. The howling of the sledge dogs was drowned by the howling of the storm. When it abated a little we found the sled, with the dogs still alive, but Angalik was dead. It was heartbreaking to see the father take his dead son in his arms and carry him as fast as he could into the kitchen of the mission that he might thaw out the body which was rigid as ice, and thus bring it back to life. Efforts at resuscitation were continued for a whole day before the Eskimos gave up hope and acknowledged that he was 'frozen through to the very heart.' "

The onlookers wept when they saw the father, mother, brothers and sisters inconsolable in their sorrow. Alak'ut said he could no longer remain in that region but must move away; otherwise he would constantly

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be seeing his dead son. So he left and finally settled at Baker Lake, a hundred miles away. There he has found new hunting grounds which furnish a livelihood for him and his family. In the peaceful little mission church at Baker Lake he and his family now kneel in prayer and remember Angalik, their beloved son.

Such stories are common enough in the Arctic region and the Fathers themselves have not escaped the rigors and hazards that beset their Eskimo charges. For instance, there was the case of Father Kermel, Superior of Eskimo Point, who fell ill with infected teeth just after the navigation season had closed. For weeks he suffered agonies. It was pitiful to watch him, for nothing could be done to ease his pain. Before long his entire body was inflamed. He should have been transferred speedily to a hospital but this was impossible. There was no wireless station within a radius of two hundred miles through which a call for help could be sent out. Neither could his fellow priests travel by dog team, since at that season of the year the days were short, and not enough snow had fallen to cover the rocks and stones.

Father Kermel's condition grew worse. He endured five months of the severest suffering, until the end of February. Then Father Ducharme passed through on his way south to get the winter's mail. He and Father Philippe decided that the sick man would have to be transported at once to the nearest railway terminal, which was two hundred and thirty miles south.

On the day of his departure from Eskimo Point, Father Kermel developed appendicitis, to add to his

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other troubles. Speedy action was absolutely necessary, and so they started on their long journey, taking an Eskimo with them as guide. It was a hard trek of nine days on the dog sledge during the coldest part of the year. They fought their way through several snowstorms and at night camped in snowhouses. It was a terrible experience for the suffering priest and he narrowly escaped death.

The first available train carried him to the hospital at Le Pas, where an appendectomy was performed at once. Then in turn came an operation on his inflamed shoulder, the amputation of a frozen toe, and the extraction of all his teeth. He now has tuberculosis of the intestines.

Things might have been different had they been able to call a MIVA airplane over a small wireless station as soon as his condition grew serious.

"How much sorrow and pain might have been avoided!" Father Philippe told me later. "And how easily one of our most successful missionaries might have been spared for the many tasks that still remain to be done! An ordinary case of appendicitis and many another illness are apt to have fatal endings because we lack the means to summon medical aid, to obtain proper remedies, or to transport the patient to a hospital. A small wireless station and an airplane really are necessities for missionaries stationed in the Arctic."

That same summer I was commissioned to make a systematic airplane survey of the territory immediately south of Chesterfield Inlet in the hope of finding the mortal remains of Father Pigeon, who had lost his life

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the previous winter. He had spent three weeks in a camp of Christian Eskimos at Bakerforeland, about forty miles south of the mission. His guide, Alphonse, was hunting, and he was teaching catechism to the people, but more especially to his catechumens.

When the end of September arrived he had to return to the mission before snow-gales and freezing waters made it impossible to travel either on land or sea. So he and Alphonse left the camp and sailed toward home in a small boat. By noon they were about halfway, for a fresh side wind had swelled the sail and helped the two horsepower engine. But when it whipped up to a gale, waves broke over the small boat and Father Pigeon and his companion could not bail out the water fast enough. They put in to shore, although they still were twenty miles from the mission. It was Saturday and Father Pigeon was anxious to get back so that he could say Mass next morning.

Alphonse wanted to walk with him, to help him if the going became too rough, but Father Pigeon thought of the boat—the only one owned by the mission—and of the much needed meat and fish they were bringing back. Such riches could not be left there, and it would take an entire afternoon to make a proper cache. Taking into consideration all these things, he decided to set off for the mission alone, taking with him his sleeping bag and some frozen meat.

Alphonse remained behind with the boat, but when he finally got to the mission thirty-six hours later, he found that Father Pigeon had not arrived.

Astonished to see him come in alone, Father Du-

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charme asked: "Where is Father Pigeon? Didn't he come with you?"

Alphonse burst into tears and sobbed: "He must be lost. He left me two days ago to return here for Mass."

Everyone at the mission was stunned. The only hope of rescue lay in quick action. All the men and dogs were called out. The Mounted Police divided the rescue squad into various groups. For two days and nights the search was continued without a letup, but in vain. Group after group returned weary and sad.

The whole country was covered with a heavy white pall of snow. The priest's cry for aid during his last battle for life, must have been smothered by the howling winds. His last prayers could have been heard only by God. When the storm passed, a deep white silence brooded over the scene of the tragedy. A Requiem Mass was offered up for Father Pigeon.

When I was detailed to pry out of that Arctic silence the secret resting place of the priest's body, Father Ducharme and Father Girard, both of whom were familiar with the territory, went with me. We flew back and forth over the entire area, searching it systematically from end to end. There was little snow in these stony wastes at this time and we thought that we might find his body.

It was a sad flight and a last service of love to Father Pigeon, but it brought no results.

The loneliness of the Arctic region also took its toll in the case of a young missionary, Father Le Blanc, the first companion Bishop Turquetil had at Chesterfield. A fur-trading vessel which had come into Hudson Bay

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was to take Father Le Blanc to a Manitoba post and back to the companionship of devoted comrades among whom he expected to find recovery and new strength.

After a trip of three stormy days, the steamer reached the mouth of Nelson River. The tides and a storm, however, forced the passengers to remain aboard for a few days. The ailing missionary was to disembark here. But he disappeared during the night before September 22. The whole ship was searched for the missing missionary. When he could not be found, it was feared that he had fallen overboard. At last a slip of paper was discovered in his cabin, on which he had written:

“Dear friends, I cannot endure my dreadful sufferings any longer. May God bless you, and have mercy on my soul. Farewell!”

His priestly robes and cross had disappeared. The unhappy man must have thrown himself overboard.

Father Le Blanc collapsed, with his mind shrouded in darkness, a premature victim of his high calling. He went to his final resting place clothed in the sacred robes which the Church puts on her priests when she carries them to their graves. For him also she has a prayer expressive of both hope and joy:

“Let perpetual light shine upon him.”

Two other missionaries, Father Le Roux and Father Rouvière, were murdered by Eskimos. The threat and danger of death from starvation was hanging over a camp on an island near the mouth of the Copper River, where it flows into the Arctic Ocean. The two Fathers were visiting a large tribe. They brought their own provisions, which soon were stolen by the wife of the

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Eskimo in whose tent they stayed. It was a lean year. Fishing had yielded poor returns, and there had been no caribou.

A member of the tribe named Kormik crept silently to where the missionaries were resting, got hold of Father Le Roux's hunting rifle and hid it, but the missionary awoke and got the gun back by force. For an outsider to be without a rifle in the Arctic regions means certain death by starvation. Kormik flew into a rage and threw himself at Father Le Roux. An older tribesman, named Koeha, stepped between them, overpowered Kormik and forced him to stay in the tent while he took the missionaries outside and told them that they no longer were safe. He advised them to go back to their station and to return next year with a larger party. He helped them to get their sled and two dogs ready and accompanied them half a day's journey to show them the way and give them protection. He even helped to pull the sled and escorted them up Copper River as far as the road that leads into the interior of what are called the Barren Lands. There he left them, advising them to continue in the same direction as far as they could go.

It was an extremely cold night at the end of October and they slept outdoors without tent or fire. But they didn't outwit Sinnisiak and Oulouksak, friends of Kormik who had slipped away from camp, followed their footprints in the snow, and overtaken them by noon of the following day. The cunning Eskimos pretended to be helpful. In the evening an igloo was built in which they all spent the night. One of the Fathers stayed on

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guard while the other slept. Next morning they were on their way again. Father Rouvière walked in front, breaking the trail with his snowshoes, while Father Le Roux brought up the rear, holding the lines tight so that the sled should not overturn. A gale blew up, which soon changed into a howling storm. Snow came down in heavy flakes and walking became more and more fatiguing.

Sinnisiak deemed the moment ripe for action. He whispered to Oulouksak and both threw off the harness straps which they had slung over their shoulders to help pull the sled, as is customary with travelers in the northland. Then Sinnisiak stepped behind the sled on some pretext and when the priest turned away for a moment, he moved swiftly to drive his large knife into Father Le Roux's back. The wounded man jumped away with a scream. As he reached the sled Oulouksak rushed at him. Sinnisiak yelled: "Cut him down. I'll take care of the other one."

Father Le Roux grabbed his attacker's shoulders and begged for mercy, but Oulouksak would not listen and stabbed him twice, first in the abdomen, and then in the heart. Hearing his friend's cry, Father Rouvière whirled around to rescue him, but when he saw Father Le Roux falling to the ground and Sinnisiak snatching the rifle from the sled, he ran toward the river. The first bullet the murderer fired went wild, the second lodged in his groin and stunned him. Both Eskimos ran toward him, Sinnisiak shouting: "Finish him."

Oulouksak drove his bloody knife into the priest's side, and he fell full length into the reddening snow.



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While he still breathed and moved his lips, Sinnisiak ran to the sled for the missionaries' axe. With it he cut the head and legs off his victim. Then Oulouksak slit open the dead man's body and tore out his liver. Both monsters ate it. Throwing the corpse into a ravine they returned to Father Le Roux, slit his body in the same way, and devoured his liver. Picking up the rifle they went back to their camp where they told what they had done.

Next day a band of good and bad Eskimos visited the scene of the crime. They found the dogs that had remained on guard near their masters' bodies. Kormik and a few of his depraved companions divided the missionaries' baggage and clothing. The others, including Koeha, saw with sorrow "how the good white men were now dead."

The predatory instincts of the Eskimos are aroused most often by their own necessity—hunger and deprivation. When a snowstorm compels them to remain in their shelters, death immediately creeps close to them. Sometimes as many as five children will be lost to one family through starvation. There are winters when death by starvation literally stalks through the land. No caribou are to be seen anywhere. This is not serious in autumn, when the fishing is good, but during the winter months, and especially in February, fishing becomes a difficult task. The mere business of cutting the ice and making holes large enough for the play of lines and tackle means laboring for a whole day.

In November, 1918, a man who was walking over the small frozen lake behind an Eskimo village col-

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lapsed from weakness and hunger and lay there unconscious. Some children playing near by noticed him. but whence had he come? Where was his family? Not till the following day did he regain consciousness sufficiently to answer these questions. Then search was made for his wife, who was found sitting under the wreckage of a tent blown down by the wind. She was calmly awaiting death.

About the same time an Eskimo who had been a robust man returned to the mission so emaciated that he was nothing but skin and bone. He arrived without his dogs, dragging his sled. In his arms, under a cowl, he carried a child, seven or eight years old, completely exhausted and unable to walk.

The winter of 1919 was a bad one and a number of Eskimo families slaughtered and ate their dogs, and then wandered around for weeks in a vain search for game. In 1920 the bodies of an eight-year-old child and an adult were found in a miserable snowhut thirty miles south of this same mission. Wrapped in their blankets and covered with snow, they were frozen to death.

Superstitious fear keeps pagan Eskimos from approaching the dead. Many who have suffered prolonged hunger have died weeks later from exhaustion. Those who are rescued while in a starving condition must submit to special treatment which is not always effective. Sometimes even a cup of tea is enough to make a patient appear intoxicated.

"Would that we could help these poor creatures!" wrote Bishop Turquetil. "A sack of flour or a tin of biscuits would at times be enough to save several lives.

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Though we have no intention of placing them under obligation, it would still be a splendid gain to convince them that we love them as parents love their children. Unfortunately our supply of provisions is inadequate. We ourselves have had to go without meat for six months at a stretch. Beans and oatmeal were almost our sole food. For such lives as we lead, this is enough. But if we had to go out each morning, like the Eskimos, with empty stomachs and without even a cup of tea, to hunt for seals or to catch fish, I fancy that we would be ill-prepared for the caresses of a northern gale."

Bishop Turquetil and the priests of his Vicariate are no strangers to the pangs of hunger. On one occasion he and a fellow priest were on a journey by dog team when they lost their way during a snowstorm not far from Reindeer Lake. They went without food for three days. The dogs died of hunger and the Bishop's companion came near losing his mind. Suddenly they fancied they saw a vision. It was no mirage, however, but a real reindeer. Bishop Turquetil unslung his rifle but he was so numb from the terrible cold—it was sixty-five degrees below zero—that he could not put a shell into the barrel. To see an abundance of food in front of him without being able to bag it was frightfully disheartening.

Three months later he and his companion went five days without food. The severest cold had passed, however, and they were able to trudge along wearily until suddenly they heard the sound of rushing water and came upon ice-encrusted falls. Water meant fish. With their last ounce of strength they managed to spread a

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little net and catch a few. So ravenously hungry were they that they ate the first alive.

It was Father Ducharme's task on one occasion to bring back to the mission through snow and storm an Eskimo woman who had been left by her husband to die in the snow. Ittikudshuk, the huntsman who had deserted his wife, came tottering back to Chesterfield Inlet, worn to a shadow. He promptly collapsed, for he had walked all day and all night, and for ten days he had sustained life only on seal oil and a few shreds of caribou leather.

"Ittikudshuk, what has become of your wife?" he was asked.

The hunter waved his hand. "She is there—very far behind. She could no longer march. For three days I carried her. For three days I dragged her. Then I could do no more. I left her behind."

The policemen of the trading post arrived and went to Ittikudshuk's hut.

"Where is your wife?" they asked.

"She is there—very far—ten days away."

The policemen went into their warm hut where the fire burned brightly in the stove. Then the missionary arrived and put the same question to Ittikudshuk. Again the answer was the same.

Quickly Father Ducharme got the dogs and sled and was off. After a long search he found in a small igloo a human skeleton in which a feeble spark of life still flickered. The woman, lame and unable to walk, had dragged herself to a stream where she had cut a hole in the ice and had caught a fish. Then she had built walls

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of snow around herself. From that rude shelter her voice had come wailing: "Ikki, Ikki, Ikkikam. I freeze, I freeze, I freeze to death."

Father Ducharme brought her back to the mission. She was baptized before she died. Then he sewed a reindeer's skin around her body and built an ice vault over it. At last she was at peace.

Some of the problems faced by the missionaries in the desolate north are outlined in the following report written by Father Bazin, which did not reach Bishop Turquetil until thirteen months after the fire he described:

"The Island of Abvajak, July 24, 1933

"Most Reverend and beloved Bishop:

"Our little settlement here has suffered a most severe trial. Yesterday morning when I had just finished Holy Mass, our church burned to the ground. Nothing is now left of it. In an unguarded moment a candle set fire to the building, and within a few minutes everything went up in flames. I was able to save only the Blessed Sacrament—three small Hosts in a pyx. Breaking through a windowpane from the outside I rescued also my prayer book in the Eskimo language. I threw a hundred buckets of water on the fire—for our little lake is only a few feet away from the site of the church. I am writing you now on this singed piece of paper which I found in the ruins on the following morning. Beyond the clothes which I am now wearing, I have nothing left, absolutely nothing. The church building contained our living quarters

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and our storeroom. Everything was built together; now all is gone. When I realized that nothing would be left to me except these smoldering ashes, I knew not what else to do but fall on my knees and resign myself to God's will. All the labors, sacrifices, and sufferings of three years were wiped out in a few moments. May the Lord forgive me my faults and save the Eskimos! I have neither a breviary nor the necessary equipment for saying Holy Mass. There is nobody with me now on this island.

"The Eskimos will return within a week or two, possibly later—as soon as the ice is gone. At present it is dangerous to cross. Until their arrival I shall have to tighten my belt.

"Yesterday, at the time of the fire, there was a strong northwesterly wind. Today there is not even a breath of air. But there are thick swarms of mosquitoes. I have no tent nor any other shelter. I don't yet know exactly what arrangements can be made for the coming fall and winter. Most likely I shall find shelter with an Eskimo family. After Christmas I plan to visit Father Clabaut at Repulse Bay. He has invited me. After that I shall return here, unless you send me orders to the contrary.

"One word more about the church and house—which no longer exist. You learned from Father Girard that we had succeeded in bringing here a hundred boards, which were used to enlarge the chapel, and to separate it from my sleeping quarters. Only recently I finished painting and decorat-

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ing. The newly arrived Eskimos were very glad to have at last a real chapel, to which they could come to pray to the dear Lord. While it is true that I am no poorer now than on the day of my arrival, I am far more unhappy. Now I cannot even say Holy Mass. It is indeed a great sorrow to be deprived of the Mass and of the breviary for so long a time. I carry the little pyx which contains the three consecrated Hosts on my breast and keep it there. I am able at least to visit with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to receive Holy Communion on the greater feast days. How can I help it if this is not in accordance with liturgical rules? I shall have to hold out in this fashion for seven or eight months. Would anyone want to deprive me of the consolation of receiving Communion at least occasionally? I am eagerly looking forward to the return of the Eskimos. Oh, pray for me, Most Reverend Sir, for it seems I may be of little use henceforth.

“This is how the catastrophe happened. The old boards which we had used were cracked in many places, so that the wind blew through them, creating a bad draft. From time to time this trouble had to be remedied. Yesterday there was a storm. After my Mass and thanksgiving, I examined with a candle a mean crack below one of the small windows. Before I could notice or check it, the flame was drawn into another poorly mended crack which had been stuffed with tar paper. It caught fire at once.

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"From the outside of the building I tried to lift up one of the roof beams to pour water down the inside of the wall. There was not enough time. The fire spread too quickly, and the whole building was soon in flames. I wanted to go back and save at least the Mass equipment, but if I had stayed long enough for that, I would have been blinded by the fire and suffocated by the smoke. I could save only the Most Blessed Sacrament.

"When I broke a windowpane from the outside to enter a second time, I could get my hands, as I have already told you, only on my prayer book in the Eskimo language.

"In the afternoon I examined the ruins. The little chalice was melted. The altar stone beside it was unharmed. Even the cloth with which it was wrapped was barely singed. Amid the ashes I found also a picture of Guy de Fontgalland which I had pinned to the wall a few days ago. Perhaps I shall find also a few remnants of my foodstuffs. At least I hope so. At this moment I keep my vow of poverty in its literal sense."

"Camp Anaoksak, August 8

"Only two days after the fire the Eskimos came to fetch me. One of them had smelled the smoke, though they were ten miles from my island. They put a boat on top of the sled, and thus risked the crossing. In their company I was able to visit two other Eskimo camps. A few days more and we will return to Abvajak. I shall live with an old man,



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Joseph Ikeperiak. Next summer I will have a tent, and during the winter I shall shield myself from the cold by building a hut of snow, moss and stones."

"Abvajak, August 25

"We are back again. Providence has aided me. With a few charred pieces of wood I have built a miniature cabin and I am writing to you now with ink which I have made myself. The new cabin's roof and its walls likewise are made of walrus skin. Next year I shall add an extension."

"September 7

"I have examined the spot where the old chief-tain saw what he believed to be coal. It is a blackish powder which looks much more like graphite. We have been away also on a fishing trip to a river in which the Eskimos built a stone dam a long time ago to keep the salmon which come in from the ocean from swimming farther upstream. We harpooned several thousand fish as part of our winter supply.

"A few days ago a schooner found its way into these regions and even landed at Igloolik. I was away at the time. A few of the Eskimos went aboard. There was, however, no exchange of news or gossip for they could speak no word of English, nor could either the captain or the sailors speak a word of Eskimo. The ship did not come to our

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island. It is a pity, for I would have liked to send you news directly.

"Since I am forced by necessity to use clothing and sleeping bags given me by the Eskimos, I have become a generous host to an army of very small uninvited 'boarders,' who manage to obtain nourishment at my expense. Since I have no means of preventing their free access to my cell, and gather new guests on every visit to any Eskimo tent, I am asking St. Benedict Labre to obtain for me patience to bear with these unwelcome guests. It is probably a good thing to begin our purgatory in this life—for I am certain that I am listed as a debtor in St. Peter's doomsday book.

"We have made some progress in the building of our new house. The roof is a thatch of grass and moss. The windowpanes are of walrus-guts. They are thin and translucent enough, but they are too tempting to the appetites of our dogs. One night they ate our windows. Within two months I expect to be outfitted with a new suit of caribou pelts, for I am going to visit the camp of the Ak-kunermiuts, among whom there is one specially kind and generous family.

"All is well so far as my health is concerned. My feet are healed again. I had injured them by wearing shoes which had been singed, hardened and shrunk in the fire.

"Sometimes I feel a craving for a cup of some hot beverage. Then I boil a pot of water; think intently of the taste of tea or coffee; close my eyes

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to help the flight of fancy, and swallow the delicious draught in one gulp.

"At other times when I feel a hankering for what civilized people call a decent meal, I cook half a dozen of the dried beans which I dug, one by one, out of the ashes of our disastrous fire. I close my eyes a second time, munch the beans, and say to myself: 'Now do a bit of penance for your youthful gluttony.'

"The dogs will be well fed next winter, for there is an abundance of walruses. We daily see hundreds of them sleeping lazily on the floating ice. Though we go close and shoot a few of them, they are not disturbed by the noise. They only give us a contemptuous look—nothing more. But they fight among themselves. I have witnessed several such battles at close range. They paid no more attention to me than if I were on the other side of the bay. Last year there was a famine, and the Eskimos had to eat walrus carcasses which had been lying on the ground for three years. What a stench rose from that decaying food!

"A few words about the spiritual life of the Eskimos. They keep coming for instruction. I teach them every Sunday, but I am sorry to say we have no Holy Mass. The young are easy to instruct, though they have an extraordinary talent for forgetting. The old are more difficult to handle, even when they show the best of intentions. They are self-taught, and had begun to formulate their own

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strange forms of Christianity before we arrived among them.

"Thinking of the future, I tell myself that next February, when I go to Repulse Bay, I shall learn the name of our new Very Rev. General who was elected in 1932. Most likely I will be the last in our missions to get this item of news. A small radio receiving set would not be out of place. I expect to receive my 1931-1932 mail when I return to this station in June, 1934. If, in the meantime, I should be given orders to go somewhere else, then I will not get that mail before 1935 or 1936. Even in that case whatever comes will still be news for me.

"The last letter from my family was dated the year before last. It came through without having been held over and told me of the death of my good mother, of my uncle, of one of my aunts, and of the Vicar General, whom you met in 1929. The dear Lord has given them their reward. May I follow them to heaven when my turn comes."

"September 24

"My admiration of St. Benedict grows from day to day. He certainly was a great saint."

"December 25

"Christmas! Christmas! No Midnight Mass, no blush of dawn in the sky, no daylight. And yet it is a Christmas which recalls the smile of the Christ child—a Christmas which brings me some consolations from my faithful flock and some hopes for

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my pagans. Christmas! . . . I smile while thinking of roast turkeys and geese, of the Christmases of former days. That was a long time ago. . . . I have once more taken Holy Communion, for it is Christmas Day. I have told myself that more than likely it is not quite in keeping with liturgical prescription to preserve the Sacred Hosts for so long a time. But what can I do without an altar, without a tabernacle, without precious veils and covers? If the Sacred Congregation were to disapprove of my action, how many years would pass before I could learn of its decisions? By that time my problem would be a thing of the past. And if an authority on liturgy were to criticize me I would like to invite him to share my way of living. Last night, after I had sung the Eskimo Christmas carol: 'Oh thank Him, thank Him; Christ is born,' I said to myself: 'Yes, my thanks, my thanks to Him. I am just as poor as He was at His birth, and He must love me for it.' After that I received my Holy Communion without the least scruple."

"Repulse Bay, April 18, 1934

"I have come here for a little visit. One pleasant evening after a five weeks' journey, I dropped in and surprised Fathers Clabaut and Henry. Their new mission here flourishes and prospers. I heard from Father Girard that you will officially recognize my new mission in Abvajak and call it St. Etienne. You will never know how deeply I am touched by this kind appreciation on your part. I

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thank you with all my heart. My greatest wish at present is to see the mission steamer, *Pius XI*, come to Abvajak. The mission could then receive its supplies every two or three years. Most of all, our people would rejoice to see the ship named after the Pope of the Missions in Abvajak at seventy degrees north latitude, strengthening the faith of our neophytes by its presence and helping to convert our pagans.

"I close my report, Most Reverend and beloved Bishop, with deep gratitude and devotion, begging at the same time the help of your prayers and your blessing.

"Etienne Bazin, O.M.I."

All these men who labor in the solitude of the icy Arctic wastes congregated at Chesterfield Inlet in the summer of 1937 for one of the strangest ceremonies I have ever witnessed, when two Archbishops and three Bishops conducted rites and prayers for the departed members of Catholic Eskimo families.

Several hundred Eskimos, more than thirty Arctic missionaries, seven Sisters and the Bishops, vested in their brilliant robes, marched from the small mission chapel past the hospital to the cemetery. Elsewhere the dead are buried, but here their bodies cannot be put underground, for the earth is frozen the whole year round. So they are laid on the ground and covered with heavy stones, piled up in the shape of coffins. The stones are a protection against wild animals.

The service was impressive. Bishop Turquetil gave

## THE WHITE HELL

a short address and blessed the graves with holy water. All of us joined in the prayer: "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord."

In the cemeteries of our home lands we see flowering shrubs, graceful cypresses and weeping willows. But in Chesterfield Inlet no flowers bloom, no trees grow. The one piece of wood that stands in that cemetery was brought by ship a distance of more than two thousand miles. It is a tall wooden cross—symbol of everlasting love in a land of everlasting ice.

THE END

I deem it an honor to send Father Schulte's new book on its message throughout the world; and I do it with the hope that the story of the Flying Priest in the Arctic may take wings and find a resting place in many a heart in many a home in many a land. It tells a story of self-sacrifice to a world gone pleasure mad. In its pages the arctic night over which had brooded, for centuries, the darkness of paganism, is illumined with the light of faith; the fierce struggle for what to us seems a wretched existence attains its true meaning by the gift of hope; the warmth of love—greater love than this no man hath—glows in the land of ice and snow.

I pray that much good may come of the book, that the faint-hearted, the discouraged, the complaining, the self-seeking, will be edified and inspired, that the noble and generous hearted be urged to still greater deeds by the reading of the heroic deeds of the men and women who live and toil, who hope and pray in the land of eternal ice and snow. Through Mary Immaculate I pray to bless Father Schulte and his work for the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Nihil obstat

ALFONS SIMON, O.M.I.

Provincial

August 1, 1940.  
St. Henry's College,  
Belleville, Ill.























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